

Sunday, April 22. 2012

One week - one third

Sunday, 2012-04-22, 12:00 (18:00 UTC), 6:39.6S, 106:29.5W, COG 260, SOG 6.5kn, Wind 14kn ESE

Yesterday afternoon we passed the 1/3rd "mark" - only 2000nm to go. I remember how I always checked the GPS for distance and time-to-target when I started on this voyage in 2009. Typical over-eager newbie behavior. Now I hardly check the distances, and only keep a close look at course, wind angle, wind strength, and speed. We'll get there when we get there, and as long as I keep the sails trimmed and the course straight it'll be in good time. Checking the GPS every hour does not speed up anything, only makes you nervous and worried. Like checking your emails every 5 minutes keeps you from getting any work done.

But 1/3rd is, psychologically, an important milestone. Especially for a journey of three weeks or more. A decent progress has been made, and many difficulties and weather patterns have already been met successfully. Confidence grows. Now it's only a short leap to 1/2 the distance, then 2/3, 3/4, and then it's already time to plan the final approach. So, basically we're already there, break out the champagne

Well, not quite - stay sharp. But the last 24 hours have been special in more ways: We saw dolphins (only the second pod), a turtle (the first), and another boat (also the first). The boat announced itself at 4am this morning as a bright sheen on the horizon, due west. I knew it wasn't a star, or the moon, and the next island is 1000nm away. So it must be a boat. Half an hour later I saw it's lights, and thought it must be a cruise ship because it looked so big and bright. I looked at the AIS display to find out it's name, and was surprised to not see it on the target list. No AIS signal? All boats with more than 300 tons have to transmit an AIS signal. AIS is an invaluable tool for collision avoidance, especially in crowded sea areas - or for short-handed sailboats. Many sailors rely on it more than on their eyes. We don't, but it's still slightly disturbing. Then I noticed that our radar warner also hadn't beeped, meaning the vessel was under way without radar too. What kind of commercial boat does that? I took out my camera, mounted my brightest tele-lens (135mm f/2.0) and took a photo. Zooming in on the photo revealed my suspicion: a fishing boat. What else.

Then this morning I got an email from "Anni Nad", the boat of Ulli and Rita. They are five days or so ahead of us, and warned us that they've encountered two large fishing boats without AIS signal. As I said - stay sharp!

Rita also told us that their desalinator stopped producing fresh water, and that Ulli can't find the fault. I had the same problem two times and send them an email back how I fixed it. Here's brief summary.

Watermaker produces no fresh water:

If the pump runs, and salt-water is ejected but no fresh-water, then it's almost certain that the intake hose isn't 100% air tight. Often the fault is at the connection between pre-filter and pump, because this hose moves about quite a lot as the pump cycles. You can also hear a different pumping noise - usually it's a hard tacking sound. This sound loses it's hard edge when air is in the chamber. Because the chamber is very small it only takes a little air and the pump is unable to produce the necessary pressure to push water through the membrane. Instead all water is ejected, and therefor

no fresh water is produced. Resolution: make sure the hose connectors between seacock, strainer, pre-filter, and pump, are 100% air-tight. Prefer flexible sealant over teflon tape.

So much for that. Fortunately our water maker has been behaving very nicely this last week. It's so great to be able to make your own fresh water, one less worry. And have I mentioned that the weather is great today? The weather is great today . I hope you've got good weather too, wherever you are. Have a nice sunday!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:40