

## The RV Savannah: Rivers to Reefs

Kania Greer

Getting invited to attend a sailing of the R/V Savannah should not be an invitation a teacher should ever turn down. This professional development day hosted by Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Foundation was planned and executed with the teacher in mind. Whether a long time resident of coastal Georgia or a visitor, the experience is rewarding and a great opportunity to do science and learn amazing facts about the coast.

Our plans for the day started with pulling up to the Big Blue Boat (christened the Lab Boat by my colleague and me. The first thing you are aware of is the sheer size of the vessel. It has massive cranes, winches, traps, and live tanks on board. While we weren't spending the night, there are berths to hold around 19 people. There are three 4 levels which we had access to, from the sleeping quarters to the captains helm (a rare treat). There is so much science and technology on board to check out even before you leave dock. The noise of the engines will probably be something you notice but I promise it soon fades into the background as you begin the CDT water quality testing and help the "rosette" into position to collect samples. There are also opportunities to collect bottom sediment which ranges in texture from muddy to coarse grain. It's really interesting to see these differences within the same ecosystem and to discuss where the sediment was originally formed (Appalachian Mountains).

We trawled for different aquatic specimens and were assisted in identification by Dr. Cathy Sakas and Jody Patterson from GRNMSF. These two women are a wealth of information about coastal processes and ecosystems.

Our original plans to go to Gray's Reef were cut short due to weather and water conditions but I would take an opportunity to go again any time. For those of you who are afraid sea sickness, I can attest that at times the water was rolling –and I myself got sick but it passes quickly, especially if you have taken precautionary medication. Regardless, you should go on this trip if you ever have an opportunity. While it wasn't a vacation cruise it was still an enjoyable and fun experience that I can take out to informal science learning events to share with the public.

And of course we wrote a new song (to the Love Boat Theme):

Labs, hands on and new  
Come aboard, the crew welcomes you  
Lab's, sciences greatest task  
You can go, you just got to ask.  
The Lab Boat, soon will be making another run  
The Lab Boat, researches everything under the sun  
Set a course for Gray's Reef  
And you'll look beneath (the waves)  
On board time will fly, as you sit and watch  
The fishes swim by.  
The Lab Boat, soon will be making another run  
The Lab Boat, researches everything under the sun

When the squalls get too much  
And the Chef has served lunch,  
You might feel ill  
And we bet you will (need)  
The Barf Bag, hanging right outside the door  
The Barf Bag, you know what this is used for  
Grab one if you're ready  
And your feet are unsteady  
There's no shame in need  
As the boat picks up speed....  
The Lab Boat, soon will be making another run  
The Lab Boat, researches everything under the sun  
Set a course for a trawl  
As you watch the sea gull's (flock in)  
There's something for everyone  
So come on and join the fun  
The Lab Boat...

But seriously, this experience is going to stick with me for a long time as I process through what we learned and saw. The vessel is amazing and the crew is top notch. I know I bombarded them with questions and they were more than happy to answer them, the food was AMAZING (Thank you Chef Ken), I can't wait to look at the samples I collected of the sediment, and tell students about the wonders of the Georgia Coast, that even I as an almost lifelong resident, didn't know.