

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 36: Mooring Levity

Rick Krishfield
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On Friday, the fourth BGOS mooring ("D") was recovered. Time constraints forced an overnight turnover of the scientific instrumentation so that it could be redeployed this morning. By this point in the cruise, the mooring work has become rather routine. Everyone on deck knows what needs to be done, and each individual has adopted their own specific tasks that they perform automatically without prompting.

The officer in charge of the deck is John Jenner, who communicates with the bridge via handheld radio. The Bosun, Rico Amamio, leads the deck crew and the crane operator through the mechanics involved in safely handling the gear over the side and back. Al Jarvis operates the crane, Gary Morgan handles the A-frame, and Brian MacKenzie or Bill May typically operate the winch controls. Dan Maclean runs the tension cart, while Terry Rhyno and Ralph Kaiser handle the spools of wire during changing and the flotation as it is deployed, among other tasks.

On the science side, Will Ostrom coordinates the deck operations with the Bosun, while Kris Newhall manages the Lebus winch functions. Rick Krishfield keeps track of every piece of gear that is deployed and recovered to ensure that the equipment is installed as intended. Mike Dempsey is also an active participant on every mooring operation helping ready the scientific instrumentation or mooring hardware as needed.

Once the top sphere surfaces, the most challenging part of the recovery operation is trying to tag the crane hook onto the float, which is approximately 10 m (over 30 ft) below deck level. Attaching the crane hook to one of the circular pickup points on the top sphere sometimes seems like a children's arcade game. At times the hook seems to slide easily into place, but on the windiest coldest days, it seems to take forever.

Even worse can be trying to tag onto the cluster of yellow backup floats which sometimes position themselves perfectly so that no chain is exposed to connect to. These floats also have an amazing tendency to creep between icefloes and squirm away from the ship. In fact the backup flotation on Mooring D was particularly stubborn, but our patience prevailed.

On the other hand, some of the most tedious time spent during mooring operations is when wire rope is being endlessly payed out or hoisted in, which can take several hours for the longest segments. Conversation, cigarettes and minor amusements are some of the methods that get us through long wire times.

Last updated: October 19, 2015



Hey, it's a mermaid! (Actually all eyes are on the top sphere while attempting to tag a line to it for pick up.) *Photo by Rick Krishfield, WHOI.*



Forty days at sea can do strange things to a man. (Get out of the way Will, I'm trying to take a picture of the profiler!) *Photo by Rick Krishfield, WHOI.*



Rico Amamio does his best Abbey Road impression for Mike Dempsey.
Photo by Rick Krishfield, WHOI.



The recorder has one of the most important jobs on deck, and must be alert at all times to ensure that the mooring operation is successful.
Photo by Will Ostrom, WHOI.