

## VAQUITA EXPEDITION 2008

**CHIEF SCIENTISTS:**

BARBARA TAYLOR  
LORENZO ROJAS-  
BRACHO

**CRUISE LEADER:**

SHANNON RANKIN

**SURVEY**

**COORDINATOR:**

ANNETTE HENRY

**SCIENTISTS:**

RENÉ SWIFT  
DENISE RISCH

**COLLABORATORS:**

JONATHAN GORDON  
NICK TRIGENZA  
TOM AKAMATSU  
SATOKO KIMURA

**VESSEL:**

CAPTAIN STEVE  
BROWN OF THE  
CORSAIR



*Our new captain,  
Steve Olson, at the  
helm of the Vaquita  
Express*

## CORSAIR REPORT

25 NOVEMBER 2008

SHANNON RANKIN



Our field season with the vaquita has drawn to a close. In the space between our last update and this one, we saw many changes to our project. Rodrigo Olson returned to England for personal reasons and was replaced by Steve Brown, our new captain extraordinaire. Denise Risch replaced me (Shannon Rankin), as I was required to sail on another research project. René Swift remained, helping with the transitions in captain and crew. In this time, the new team (René, Denise, and Steve) were able to complete all the work requested, as well as additional tracklines to provide additional coverage in the western study area. Any way you look at it, this field season was a success for the Vaquita Express.

While our time in the field may be coming to an end—this is only a small part of the overall project. The “Corsair Project” first evolved in January 2008, and required months of preparation by several people. Jonathan Gordon and Tom Akamatsu built the acoustic equipment, Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho and Armando Jaramillo took care of field logistics, Barb Taylor located funding, and Annette Henry took care of problems I never knew existed until they were already solved! The greatest contribution I feel that I made to preparation of this project was to select the most incredible group of team-players that a person could ever ask for. Our captains (Rodrigo and Steve) were not only outrageously competent—they were a lot of fun. Denise and



*Shannon Rankin on watch at the mast of the Vaquita Express, with the spinnaker flying.*



*Denise and René enjoying another perfect day at work.*

René are two of the best field acousticians I have worked with. And the boat—well, needless to say, we are all in love with the Vaquita Express. Between us, we have devised as many plans to conduct projects on a Corsair sailboat as there were days in the field. For the first time in years, I actually felt a tug of remorse in my leaving a field project. Our time on the Corsair Project of the Vaquita Expedition was a rare experience, with an exceptional group of people, and an experience that none of us take for granted.

Now that the Vaquita Express is back in the hands of the owners (Thanks Jimmy, Jon, and Frank!), and all those involved in the project have returned to their respective corners of the world—the project is not yet completed. After eight months of preparation, two and a half months of field work—we now prepare for the tedious part of any research project. The data must be analyzed, reports written, and advice given towards future research projects on the vaquita. This is no small feat, with critical team players in the U.K., Mexico, Japan, and the United States. Months of hard work still remain, and with luck, at the end of this hard work we will have devised a plan that will help to monitor the vaquita population in the waters of the Upper Gulf of California.



*René, Shannon, and Rodrigo begin another perfect day on the Vaquita Express.*