

# Japan-Siberia-Aleutians-Alaska-British Columbia



Arriving in Ketchikan by sea is a scenic experience.



Ketchikan is a small place.



Ketchikan viewed from our ship's balcony.



# Looking the other way.



Our day's adventure was on the Aleutian Ballad, a former crab fishing boat out of Dutch Harbor. She appeared in the TV show "Most Dangerous Catch" until...



Epic Waves: Blind-Sided | Deadliest Catch



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The Aleutian Ballad suffered severe damage, rolling until its masts touched the water and gaining several holes in the hull. The insurance adjuster said that in his 35 years in the business, he had never seen a ship with even half that much damage stay afloat. But she did. The insurance company agreed to pay for a new hull, but wanted nothing more to do with the ship.





The owner lengthened the ship and added a seating area to take tourists out and show them how they did their work. The Aleutian Ballad would never again see the Bering Sea, but she was crewed by real Bering Sea crews, sailing out of Ketchikan.



We climbed aboard.



First we fished for halibut. By law, they must catch halibut with hooks, not with nets.



Baited hooks were in the water, placed on a previous trip.  
The crew snared their tethers to pull them in.



# Throwing out a grappling hook.

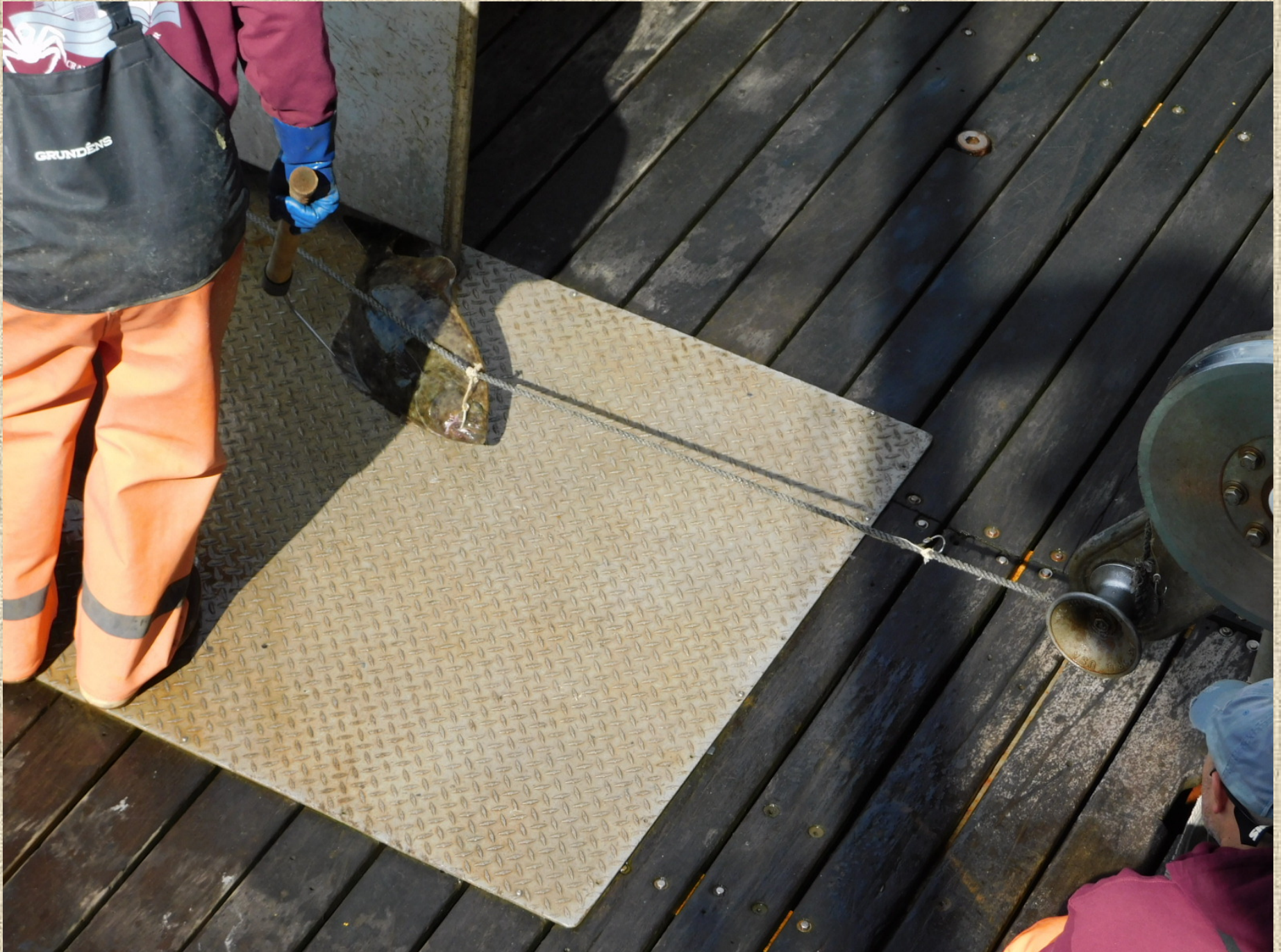


# Pulling in the hook line.





They have hooked a halibut.





The Pacific halibut begin life like a more normal fish, swimming upright with eyes on each side of the head. But as it matures, one eye migrates to the other side, and it swims turned sideways.



It turns dark on top and white on the bottom, so it becomes hard to see from either above or below.



Everything caught on this trip was thrown back, but this halibut would have been thrown back anyway because it is less than the 32-inch minimum size.



Most of the catch comes via netted traps, pulled in by a winch (or sometimes a wench).



Explanation of inside joke: when we were in the tourist crew of the “Stars and Stripes” in a yacht race in St Maarten, my job was as a “backstay grinder” and Mary’s was as a “serving wench.” We still refer to her as “the serving wench.”

(The Stars and Stripes is the yacht which Dennis Connor used to win the America’s cup and bring it back to the US from Australia in 1987.)



They have hooked a trap and are pulling it up.



Pulling up. See the following animation which I made by connecting my many photographs into a video.







What they caught here is a box crab. They have meat, but you do not see them in restaurants.



You grab a box crab by the back of their body.



Traps, including the catch, go back into the water for the next trip.



This is a snow crab. They had been on our ship's buffet every night.



You hold a snow crab by the legs.



The snow crab had been pulled up by the winch and is being held by a wench.



# Three old crabs.



You grab a prawn behind the head. That tourist is thinking about doing that to the wench.





# King's Gambit: prawn to King's 4.



Throwing out lines.

Somehow, all these lines did not get tangled.

Yeah, but how good are they at wrangling clothes hangers?



Pulling in another kind of trap: a long line with multiple small nets.



What came out was a king crab.



King crabs are much larger than snow crabs.



Usually their right claw is the “crusher.” You don’t want it to grab you.



The smaller left claw is the “cutter.” You don’t want that one to grab you either.



They did not let us hold these bad boys.





This wench is holding one under the winch.

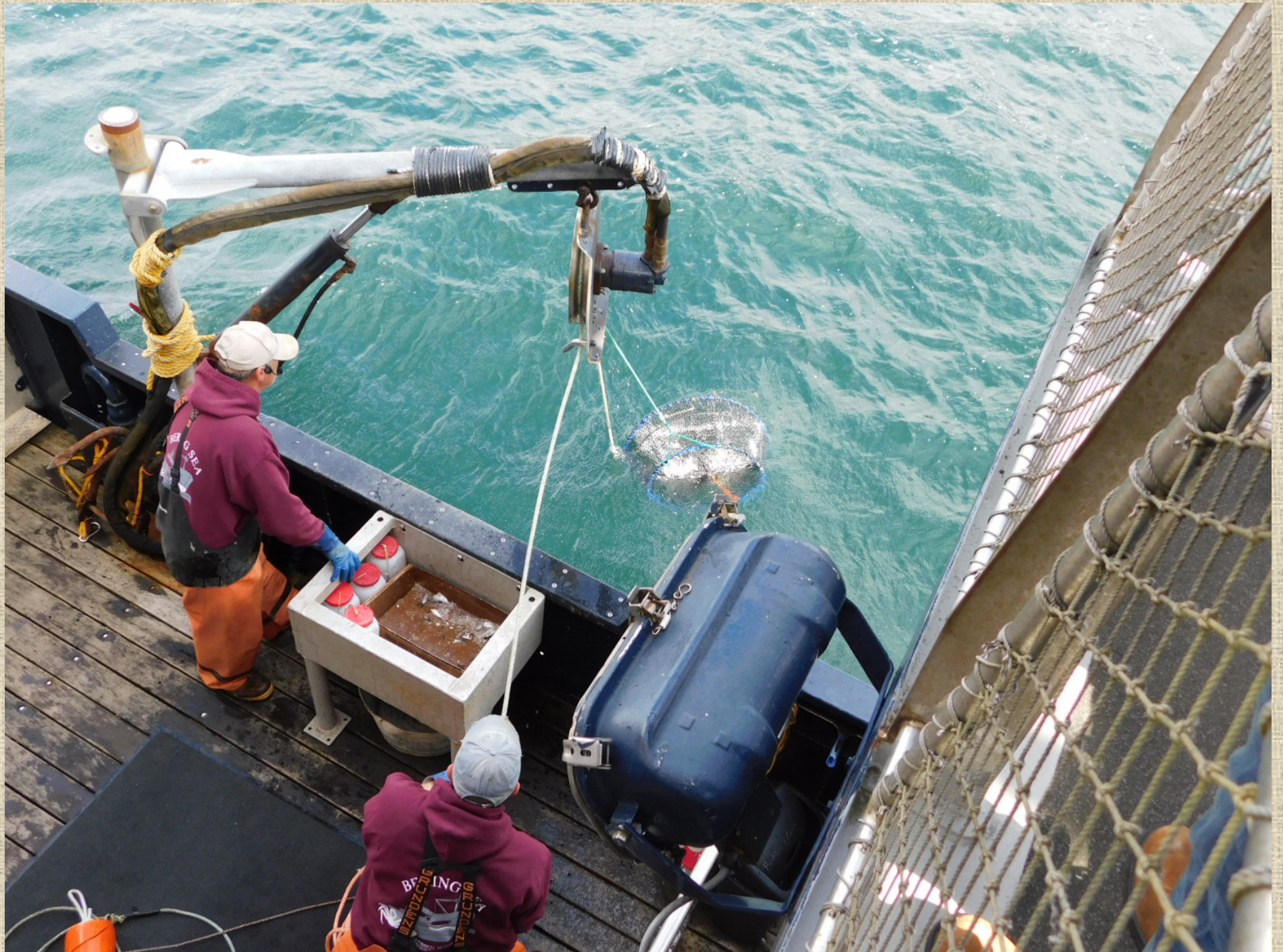




Using grappling hooks to pull in more traps.







There is something different here.



It is an octopus. They love to eat crabs, and you cannot keep them from getting into the traps.



The only thing hard on an octopus is their beak, and they can get through any opening larger than their beak.





This is actually a fairly small octopus.



They pulled up a barrel, known to be an octopus hang-out.



Yep, there is a larger one in there.



Out it comes.



Suction cups actually don't contain any teeth. They're muscular structures and they can be used to taste, smell, and grip. Each suction cup has more taste receptors than does a human tongue!



As the men handled the octopus, you could hear a constant popping sound as the suction cups on the eight arms grabbed their clothing and got pulled away.



There can be 280 suckers per arm, totaling 2240 on a giant Pacific octopus.



Adults usually weigh around 33 lb, with an arm span up to 14 ft.





Guinness World Records lists the biggest as 300 lb with an arm span of 32 ft.



They are among the most intelligent animals in the sea. If you put them in a maze with a crab at the end for bait, they will find the crab eventually by trial and error. Then if three days later you put them in the same baited maze, they will go quickly right to the bait with no errors.



The suckers on an octopus are individually controlled. This means they can be isolated to rotate, grasp, and feel surfaces.

Each arm has been described to have an almost “mini brain” at its base to help control the suction cups and take in external information from the environment.

As a result of the neuron distribution, if an octopus’ arm is detached from its body, it can continue to move around and use its suction cups for a short period of time.



Octopus in tanks have been known to climb out of their tank and go to another tank and eat the contents, then returning to their own tank.



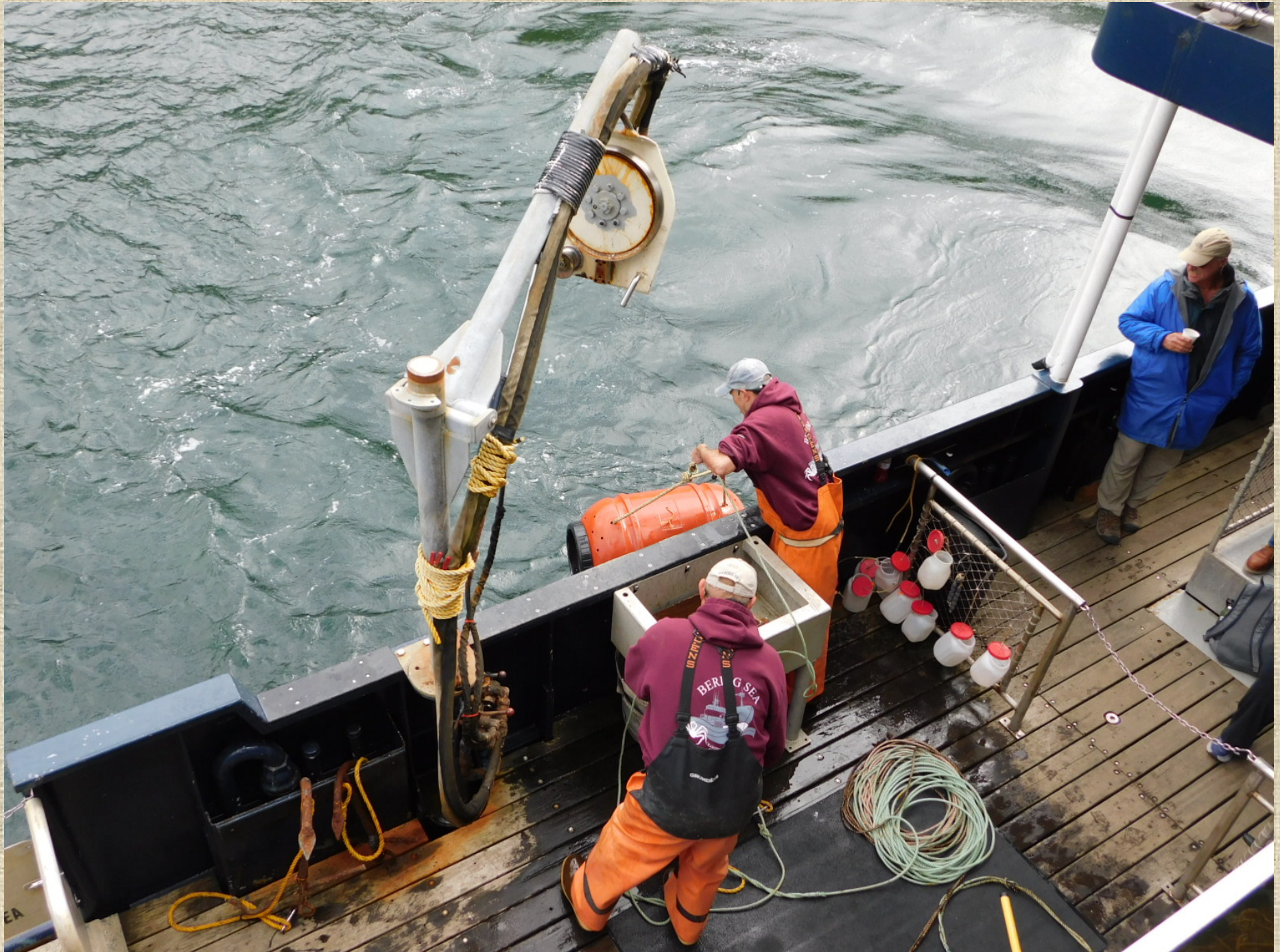
They have also been know to climb out of a tank and open a screw-top jar of food and eat it. They can also change color at will.



It goes back in its barrel, and back into the water.



# Lowering the barrel into the sea.



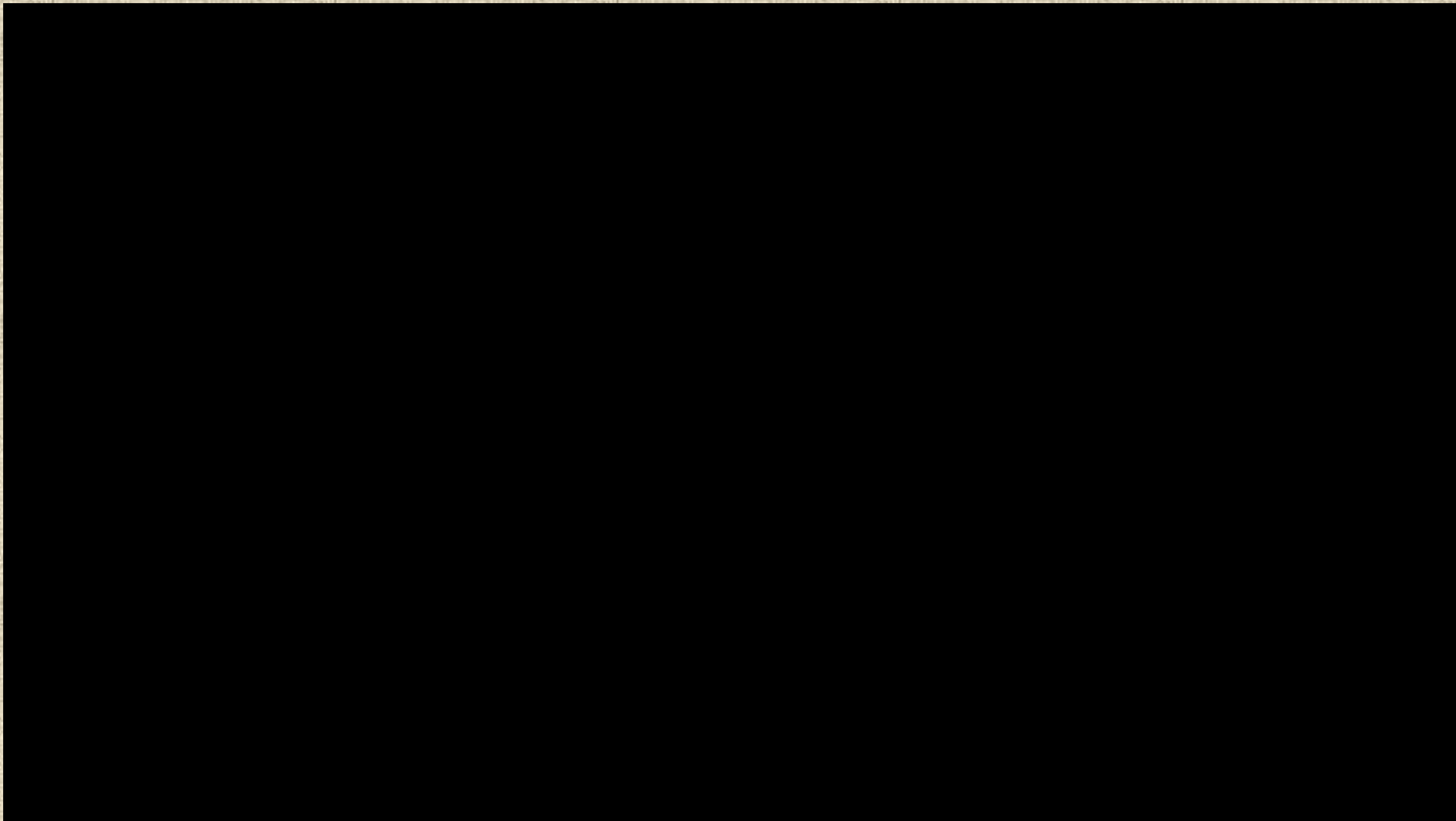
We went by an island with trees full of bald eagles.





The eagles were probably expecting us, as the crew would throw lots of small herring into the water for the eagles. I took many many pictures and put them together into another video. Get ready.

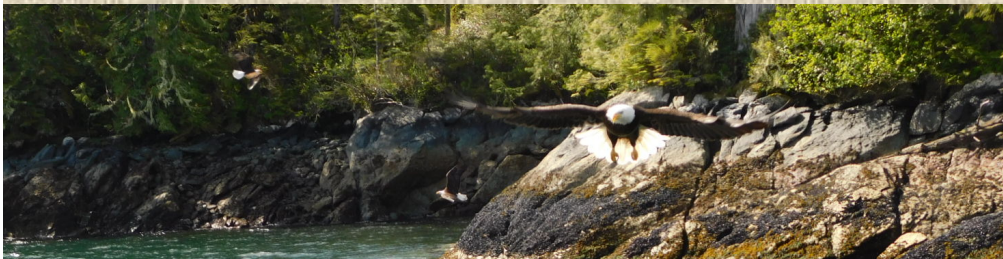




# One last aerobatic eagle trick.



# An eagle as viewed by a fish



This was maybe our best shore excursion ever.





Bonus  
pictures:  
the backstay  
grinder at  
the helm.

