

# SAVE THE WHALES

Save The Whales' purpose is to educate children and adults about marine mammals, their environment and their preservation.

## Polar Bear Listed as "Threatened"

### Under Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Department of Interior formally declared in mid-May that the polar bear should be listed as a "threatened" species. After months of delays, listing the struggling polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a small victory, but the endangered status would have required a stronger protective standard. The Department had been stalling for months on a decision until forced by lawsuits and petitions signed by 100,000 people urging protection for the polar bear.

### Global Warming Ignored by Administration

The administration at the same time enacted policies to prevent the polar bear's listing from affecting runaway greenhouse gas emissions. The gravest threats to the polar bear's survival are oil and gas drilling and global warming. Before polar bears and other Arctic wildlife can gain some protection from global warming, strong legislation needs to be enacted. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne said that, as he interprets the ESA, it doesn't prevent oil and gas development in primary polar bear habitat like the Chuckchi Sea where 30 million acres were recently opened to exploratory drilling.

The listing decision includes a "special rule" and a declaration that greenhouse gas emissions cannot and should not be limited by the ESA. In effect, this undermines the entire point of the polar bear's listing which is to slow down the primary actions leading to the bear's possible extinction.

The Center for Biological Diversity and Natural Resources Defense Council are taking the administration back to court to ensure that the polar bear and its habitat are fully protected.

### State of Alaska Sues Interior Secretary Kempthorne

During the first week of August, the state of Alaska sued Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne. They seek to reverse his decision to list the polar bear as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Governor Sarah Palin (Republican Vice Presidential nominee) and other Alaska state officials fear that its listing will impair offshore oil and gas development in the Chuckchi and Beaufort seas in Alaska's northern waters. This is also prime habitat for the only polar bear under U.S. jurisdiction.

Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity called the lawsuit "completely ridiculous and a waste of the court's time." She said it helped oil companies, not the polar bear.

Last year, summer ice was at a record low, about 1.65 million square miles, which is nearly 40% less than the long-term average between 1979 and 2000.

### U.S. Navy - Sonar Testing To the Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case as to whether the U.S. Navy will be allowed to go ahead with their sonar testing. The Supreme Court term begins in October.



## International Whaling Commission

### Meets in Santiago, Chile

The 60th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in Santiago, Chile was chaired by the U.S. Representative to the IWC, Dr. William Hogarth.

" Biggest area of contention is Japan's Special Permit Whaling. In 2007, Japan killed 551 Antarctic minke whales, 207 common minkes, 100 sei, 50 Brydes and 3 sperm whales under their JARPN II program (% feasibility study+by Government of Japan) in the North Pacific.

" Denmark proposed that it be allowed a strike limit of 10 humpback whales annually for the years 2008-2012 for West Greenland. The Commission was deeply divided over this proposal and it was defeated by 36 to 29 with 2 abstentions.

Other issues discussed were:

" Southern right whale population of Chile-Peru.

" Proposal for sanctuaries, in particular, for a South Atlantic Sanctuary made by Brazil, Argentina and South Africa. It has been discussed in the past with no agreement being reached.

" Environmental and health issues, such as how environmental factors affect cetaceans. Two workshops will be held during the intersessional period on the effects of climate change and chemical pollutants on cetaceans.

" Presentation on small cetaceans in the southeastern Pacific (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile), since so little is known about them, and conservation concerns.

" Possible extinction of vaquita (see vaquita article on page 6). (IWC continued page 9)

### Table of Contents

Polar Bear Threatened Species	1
IWC Meeting, Santiago Chile	1
Omura, %New+Whale Species	2
Threats to Narwhal	2
Environment Being Undone	3
Flukes Up/Flukes own	3
Death Baby Humpback Whale	4
Our Darkest Hour	4
Results of Humpback Population Study	4
Memorials/Inspirations	5
Saving the Vaquita	6
Gray Whales Reach Out to Human	7
Stranded Whales - Africa	7
Sing to Save The Whales	7
Suit Filed to Save Whales From Ships	8
Petitions on Website	8
Humpback Whale Study	8
Protected Marine Area - HI	8
Gray Whale Costume - WOWI	9
Diver Attempts Whale Rescue	9
Minke Whale Numbers Declining	9
Giant Squid Found off CA	10

# A "New" Whale

## Omura's Whale Balaenoptera cf. B. omurai

**Order:** Cetacea  
**Suborder:** Mysticeti  
**Family:** Balaenopteridae

The Omura whale was described in 2003. There is now profuse evidence from molecular genetic studies to confirm that Omura is a valid species. It is different from and not closely related to Bryde's whales. Confirmation of the nomenclature is awaiting determination from a type specimen in the Calcutta Museum.

Specimens of this whale were included among pygmy/dwarf Bryde's whales in some studies, but it is now known to be offshoot of the rorqual\* line of whales, and perhaps more closely related to the blue whale.

The body shape of the Omura's whale is streamlined and sleek. They apparently have only one prominent ridge on their rostrum, whereas most Bryde's whales have three. The dorsal fin shape is not well known, but it is believed to be like that of Bryde's and sei whales which is tall and falcate\*\* and rising abruptly out of the back. They may be very falcate some evidence suggests. The flukes are broad with a relative straight trailing edge.

The Omura's color pattern is not completely known, but it most closely resembles that of the fin whale with an asymmetrical lower jaw (which is white on the right and dark on the left). It appears that some animals have light streaks and blazes that extend up from the light ventral side onto the darker back. Anterior edges and inner surfaces of the flippers are white and so is the ventral surface of the flukes which have a black margin.

The 80-90 throat pleats reach beyond the navel. The 180-210 pairs of baleen plates are short and broad. In color, they are yellowish white to black and some may be two-tone.

Because the Omura has only recently been described and its physical appearance is not well known, care must be taken in identifying the species and ruling out other whales (small fin, sei, Bryde's and minke whales).

The complex color pattern of the Omura should be easily identifiable when it is clearly observed. It has an asymmetrical lower jaw and light streaks and chevrons on its back. The dorsal fin may have a very hooked fin rising at a steep angle.

Three head ridges has for many years been a source of confirming a Bryde's whale; however there is some suggestion that the Omura may sometimes also have accessory head ridges. Also, water rippling off the head of other species can be mistaken for accessory head ridges.

Omura's whales can also be confused with minke whales but they are generally slightly smaller and have a sharper point to the head when viewed from above. The white bands on its flippers are indicative of common minkes. They also have symmetrical head coloration, unlike the Omura. To be absolutely certain of the whale's identify, genetic samples may be required for confirmation.

**Distribution:** The limits of its range are not well known but they appear to be limited to the western Pacific and eastern Indian Oceans. Apparently, it is restricted to tropical and subtropical waters and

appears over the continental shelf in relatively nearshore waters.

**Ecology and Behavior:** Little is known of the species' ecology and virtually nothing is known about its reproductive biology. It is suspected that it does not have a precise breeding season unlike most rorquals. Generally seen in pairs, they may congregate in larger groups on feeding grounds.

**Feeding and Prey:** Omura's whales are probably primarily schooling fish eaters. Like most other rorquals, they are lunge feeders.

**Threats and Status:** Omura's whales have probably never been hunted as extensively as their larger relatives: the blue, fin, sei and Bryde's whales. Because of this, it is probably not critically depleted, except possibly in the Philippines. The Japanese have hunted them under scientific whaling+in the Solomon Sea and near the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean. They have also been killed by artisanal whalers from Philippine villages (and probably Indonesia).

**IUCN status:** Not listed - International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, now the World Conservation Union (IUCN Red List).

Source: *Marine Mammals of the World: A Comprehensive Guide to their Identification* by Thomas A. Jefferson, Marc A. Webber and Robert L. Pittman

\***Rorqual** - A whale of the family Balaenopteridae which includes the blue, fin, sei, Bryde's, minke and humpback whales.

\*\***Falcate** - Sickle shaped and curved toward the tail; recurved.

## Narwhals in Danger from Distribution of Pack Ice

A scientist predicts that harm from global warming is somewhat greater for the narwhal than for the polar bear, but its current population of 50,000 to 80,000 probably won't die off before the 20,000 or so polar bears.

Polar bears are directly harmed by melting ice, but the problem is that narwhals are true Arctic specialists,+said Dr. Kristin Laidre of the Polar Science Center at the University of Washington. Because they don't eat anything that comes along, unlike the beluga, their environment is more unpredictable. Dr. Laidre states, Narwhals are regular in the habits, inflexible about where they spend their time, and tend to return to the same place year after year.+ Polar bears can adapt somewhat to the changing Arctic climate, but Stanford University biologist Terry Root doesn't believe that narwhals can.

The long tapering tusk of the narwhal has long been a source of speculation as to its use. Males have been sighted gently jousting with their tusks, sometimes with a female between them. A recent study suggests that the tusk is used as a sensory antenna to better understand its surroundings. It is more difficult to predict global warming on the narwhal because so little is known about it. Loss of sea ice will make the narwhal more vulnerable to killer whales who, in recent years, are traveling farther north.

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Spring/Summer 2008

## Bushwhacked – Environment Being Undone

For more than a year, White House officials have blocked a rule aimed at protecting endangered North Atlantic right whales by challenging the findings of government scientists, according to documents obtained by the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The documents were mailed to the environmental group by an unidentified National Oceanic and Administration (NOAA) official. They illuminate a struggle that has been going on between the White House and NOAA for more than a year. In February 2007, NOAA issued a final rule aimed at slowing ships traversing some East Coast waters to 10 knots or less during parts of the year to protect the right whales, but the White House has blocked the rule from taking effect.

The surviving population of the North Atlantic right whale population numbers fewer than 300. This makes them one of the most endangered species on Earth, and scientists have warned that the loss of one more pregnant female could spell disaster for the species. Some shipping companies have opposed the NOAA proposal, saying slowing their vessels will cost the industry money.

The documents, which House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) released, show that the White House Council of Economic Advisers and Vice President Cheney's office repeatedly questioned whether the rule was needed. Waxman, who sent a letter to the White House asking for an explanation, said the exchange "appears to be the latest instance of the White House ignoring scientists and other experts."

In one document, the Council of Economic Advisers questioned "the reliability of analysis in the published literature on which NOAA is basing its position." The council conducted its own analysis and concluded that "the relationship between [vessel] speed and [whale] injury . . . may not be as strong of a relationship as is suggested in published papers."

NOAA scientists were not swayed, writing in response, "The basic facts remain that (1) there is a direct relationship between speed and death/serious injury, and (2) at vessel speeds at or below 10 knots the probability of death/serious injury is greatly reduced."

Cheney's staff argued "that we have no evidence (i.e., hard data) that lowering the speeds of 'large ships' will actually make a difference." NOAA again fired back, writing that there was "no basis to overturn our previous conclusion that imposing a speed limit on large vessels would be beneficial to whales."

Since NOAA initially proposed the regulation, at least three right whales have died from ship strikes and two have been wounded by propellers. Amy Knowlton, a scientist at the New England Aquarium who has studied right whales, said the documents show that "the rule really is based on good science. NOAA has done a very good job in sticking to its guns on this." Kristen Hellmer, spokeswoman for the White House Council for Environmental Quality, said in a statement that the office is reviewing the Waxman letter. "We will make an appropriate response to the committee," she said, adding that, "We are confident this longstanding rulemaking process will provide an approach that will achieve our shared goals."

Beth Allgood, a program officer at the International Fund for Animal Welfare, questioned why the administration had not acted on the rule. "The administration's own scientists have answered these questions six months ago, and they still haven't issued the rule. She continued, "It's not a huge burden on industry; it's a huge burden on the whales.+

### FLUKES UP to Scandinavian airline SAS

for finding a viable way to cut down on greenhouse-gas emissions and fuel costs: *fly slower.*



The airline has been testing slower speeds since early 2006, and says it has saved some \$12 million in fuel costs since then. And have no fear about missing your connection; hitting the brakes adds mere minutes to travel time.

### FLUKES UP to Members of Parliament in Britain

for discussing a carbon-credit trading system for individuals.

The system could be modeled on cap-and-trade programs for industry, and set a cap on the carbon amount each person is allowed to emit. It would require those who would exceed their allotment to purchase credits from those who emit less. Actions such as using gasoline, consuming electricity, and flying would require use of carbon credits.

"Personal carbon trading could be essential in helping to reduce our national carbon footprint," the committee said in a report. "Further work is needed before personal carbon trading can be a viable policy option and this must be started urgently, and in earnest."

### FLUKES UP to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi

for greening the Senate office building dining room. Gone are Styrofoam and plastic utensils. Produce is now purchased from local suppliers.

### FLUKES UP to Cynthia Beal of Portland, Oregon

who is making biodegradable coffins. She states, % is composting at its best.+ Her company, Natural Burial Company, will sell a variety of eco-friendly burial products, including the Ecopod, a kayak-shaped coffin made out of recycled newspapers.

**FLUKES UP to Carmel by the Sea, CA** where Styrofoam cups and takeaway boxes have been illegal for 20 years, but in mid-June, the city council decided to start enforcing the law with fines and lawsuits.

**FLUKES UP to Home Depot** who has agreed that if customers bring their used CFLs (compact fluorescent lights) to any of its locations, Home Depot will recycle them for free. They caution to be careful when you are transporting CFLs, as broken ones increase the risk of mercury exposure.

### FLUKES DOWN to Dow Chemical and

**Boeing** who have been ordered to pay a total of \$926 million for nuclear pollution at the now-closed Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant near Denver, following a jury trial that ended in 2006. The class-action suit against the companies started 18 years ago, and involves some 12,000 area homeowners seeking compensation for property damages and health risks from plutonium contamination. Dow ran the nuclear weapons facility for the U.S. Energy Department from 1953 to 1975; Rockwell International, which Boeing bought in 1996, took over management from 1975 until 1989 when it closed. None of the money will be paid until after the companies exhaust their appeals. And even then, both Dow and Boeing maintain that it's ultimately the Department of Energy that will have to pay since they were just contractors.



## Death of a Young Humpback Whale Australia

The baby humpback whale named Colin was euthanised August 21, 2008. Separated from his mother, he was first seen on August 17 in the waters on the northern side of Sydney. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Officers and the Water Police began to monitor him. They all hoped that his mother would return. When this did not happen, Colin began to try and feed from the hull of several boats. A decision was made to attempt to lure the young whale out to deeper water in an effort to locate his mother. Colin disappeared in the open water and the rescue boat turned around.

The following morning Colin was back. People from all over the world offered their suggestions as to the feeding and care of Colin. Funds were offered to keep him alive. Save The Whales received numerous emails and phone calls from people distraught over the baby whose only real hope for survival was to locate his mother.

Two baleen whale babies in history had successfully been kept alive and they were gray whales. J.J. was captured by SeaWorld San Diego when she was only days old. Lifeguards found her floundering in the surf off Los Angeles' Marina del Rey on Jan. 11, 1997. She was malnourished, dehydrated, and undersized at 13 feet, 10 inches, and weighed only 1,670 pounds. Her ribs showed through her skin and her umbilical cord was still attached.

At SeaWorld, she was feed through a two-inch diameter tube inserted into her mouth. Marine biologists nursed her with a simulation of mother's milk . a formula of cream, vitamins and pureed fish. She grew to 30 feet and 18,000 pounds. Too large for confinement, she was released into the Pacific Ocean.

One of the problems with a lost whale calf is that moving it into captivity would be very stressful and could harm or even kill the animal, depending on its health. Save The Whales contacted U.S. marine mammal rescue groups (or groups that move large marine animals), the Marine Mammal Center in CA, the Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) in CA, and SeaWorld San Diego. We only talked to one person and that was at the MBA. To save Colin, there would have to be an aquarium or facility in Australia where he could be confined and fed.

The agency in Australia that was in charge of Colin is the Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW). An Australian contact was able to get through on the busy phones and told them that Save The Whales would be willing to offer funds to help feed the baby whale. They asked our contact what formula to feed him, and Save The Whales emailed them a formula for baby cetaceans.

ORRCA (Australian marine mammal research and rescue organization) reported that a conference was planned to discuss Colin's best chance of long-term survival. Before that occurred, however, his condition deteriorated rapidly. He was unable to swim strongly and he began to lie motionless and lethargic in the water. Veterinarians were shocked at his weakened condition

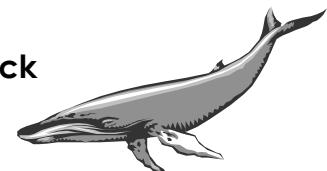
Authorities, after much consultation, decided to end his misery, complying with the Cruelty to Animals Act. Veterinarians did what they had to do to end Colin's suffering. Despite reports to the contrary, according to ORRCA, it was quick and controlled. His body was taken to Taronga Zoo for necropsy.

The Environment and Climate Change contact said that, %lessons learned here and further research will assist us all in developing

(continued on page 7)

## Results of Study on Humpback

### Whale Populations



Humpback whale populations in the North Pacific Ocean have increased according to a study funded primarily by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department. This study was conducted by over 400 whale researchers throughout the Pacific region.

While some populations have grown since federal protections in the 1960s and 70s, isolated populations, mainly in the western Pacific Ocean, have not recovered and show low numbers.

The overall population of humpbacks reveals approximately 18,000 to 20,000 whales. In 1966, when international whaling was banned, the population of humpback whales in the North Pacific was estimated at less than 1,500. At least half of these whales migrate between Alaska and Hawaii.

SPLASH (Structure of Populations, Levels of Abundance and Status of Humpbacks) authored the report. The research was an international effort that involved more than 50 organizations. Begun in 2004, the study determined whale migratory patterns and estimated population sizes by using a library of 18,000 photographs of whale flukes used to identify 8,000 individual whales.

Central coordinator for the SPLASH project was Cascadia Research in Olympia, Washington. They matched whale fluke photographs from their feeding grounds with photographs from their wintering area. In this way, they were able to determine the individual whales from their patterns, as well as their movements, and estimates of the sizes of different populations.

Researchers also collected more than 6,000 biopsy samples for studies of genetics and population. The photographs will also be studied to determine how levels of scarring from line entanglement and ship strikes vary among regions. These samples, which have not yet been analyzed, should provide important clues into the humpback's intricate population structure and current threats to its recovery.

### Our Darkest Hour Lights go off around the world

Over the weekend of March 29-30, cities, businesses, and individuals around the world switched off or dimmed their lights for an hour to raise awareness about climate change. The event called "Earth Hour," started last year in Sydney, Australia. Organizers claim that this year it spread to about 380 cities and towns in 35 countries.

Non-essential lights and famous landmarks around the world, including the Sydney Opera House and the Golden Gate Bridge, were darkened. Internet search engine Google even switched its homepage background from white to black to mark the event. Aside from awareness-raising, the event did save a modest amount of energy in some areas.

But that wasn't necessarily the point. "The main point is not to make a significant dent in climate change, but to demonstrate the need for people to take leadership on their own to address this problem," said Richard Moss of the World Wildlife Fund.



## memorials

### Linda R. Garvey

June 20, 1945 - February 18, 2008

We honor and celebrate Linda, whose life touched so many of us. We toast her passion, love, and fierceness in living. Linda was a lover of life in all its wonder, from the smallest of birds to the largest of mammals. She counted one of her greatest joys a recent trip to Baja California to meet up close a baby gray whale being shown off by its mother. May the emptiness we feel at her passing be at least partially filled with the joy and emotion she showed in living every moment to the fullest.

Contributions made to Save The Whales on her behalf will support education and outreach programs to school children.

### Stephen Claussen

May 19, 2008 at age 41

A Seattle man, well known for his love of whales, is dead following a tragic plane crash in New Jersey. At the time of his death, he was working on a federal study of coastal birds. Claussen was a self-educated wildlife expert best known for working with Keiko, the orca star of the *Free Willy* movies.

### Perth Amboy Schools Have Save The Whales Day to Honor Memory of Alison Rodecker For Second Year

Save The Whales recognition campaign held by the public schools in Perth Amboy, N.J. raised \$1,277.30. Superintendent of Schools John M. Rodecker reported that the outpouring of support in response to this cause was inspired by his daughter Alison's passion for whales.

Dr. Rodecker reports that he hopes to continue advocating for the support of activities which would help raise awareness of the plight of oceanic mammals. Their magnificence was truly Alison's passion. Alison's impact on this project continues to demonstrate how one person can make a difference. Save The Whales will use these funds for their educational programs in Alison's memory.

The funds came from staff, parents and students in conjunction with student assemblies, whale-related classroom projects and community participation. Participating schools were William C. McGinnis Middle School, Samuel E. Shull Middle School, Robert N. Wilentz Elementary School, Dr. Herbert N. Richardson Elementary School, and Ignacio Cruz Early Childhood Center.

### Colston's Girls' School Raises Funds in U.K.

The above school in Bristol U.K. raised £16 which was donated to Save The Whales. We will use the funds for our educational programs and thank the Girls of C.T. as they wish to be designated. April 2008

### Key Club High Tech High School

The Key Club of North Bergen, N.J. donated \$50, and we are most appreciative that they selected Save The Whales as the recipient of their contribution. The funds will raise awareness among children re the plight of marine mammals.

August 2008

### Wisconsin High School Homecoming Raises Funds

The Plymouth High School Homecoming Committee celebrated their 2007-2008 homecoming with an "Under the Sea" theme. The committee chose Save The Whales to receive their \$150 donation. Thank you for helping our educational outreach with your generosity.

January 2008

### Seven-Year-Old Holds Bake Sale

Seven-year-old Sami Schepers of Waukee, IA, held a bake sale and raised \$25 which she contributed to Save The Whales. Her mother Melanie states that Sami is very caring and interested in marine biology, and she understands that we have an obligation to help. Thank you, Sami, for your care and contribution.

December 2007

### School Raises Money with Dance

Santa Catalina School, Monterey, California, raised \$568 in the middle school, with special participation by the seventh grade class. Each year, the middle school sponsors one dance and chooses a worthy cause for the proceeds. The donations were received as the entry fee for the dance and the funds raised were given to Save The Whales to help in the good work that your organization is doing. Thank you Santa Catalina School.

November 2007

### Birthday Party Fundraiser sans Balloons

Zach Abramson of Piermont, NY raised \$350 at his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday party. Because he had read Save The Whales' Balloon Alert, no balloons were used. His mom ordered 20 Humphrey books as party favors for his guests, found at [www.savethewhales.org](http://www.savethewhales.org) Whale Store.

May 2008

### Birthday Party Fundraisers

Ian Malbec, age 11, of Vermont received thanks for raising \$95 in donations at his birthday party for Save The Whales. We are impressed with his generous actions on behalf of the whales. Ian is an example of how each person can make a difference.

April 2008

Lucy Kneissler of Massachusetts raised \$30 at her 11th birthday party for Save The Whales! Her donation will help fund education and outreach programs to schoolchildren about whales. Thank-you Lucy for making your contribution. The inspirational Lucy also had a successful fundraiser at her previous birthday.

May 2008

Four year old Mason Isaac of Illinois raised \$717 for Save The Whales at his "Let's Make A Difference" birthday party. Every year, Mason chooses a different organization to support in lieu of birthday gifts. His mother decorated their home with cut-out whales. Many thanks to Mason and his family for their compassion and generosity. Mason is an inspiration to others for his efforts to help the whales.

June 2008

### Lemonade Stand Raises Funds

My friends and I (3rd grade students) did a lemonade stand and raised \$41.91. We wanted to donate to Save The Whales for different reasons. One is that we know the whales are going extinct. We hope the whales will be safe and sound anywhere. We really liked doing this because it proved that anyone can make a difference.

Leela, Michaela & Tina, The Lemonade Stand Girls, New York

July 2008



# Saving the Vaquita: The World's Most-Endangered Cetacean

Thomas A. Jefferson, Ph.D.

The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*, often previously called the Gulf of California harbor porpoise) has been recognized as a rare and vulnerable species since its scientific discovery fifty years ago. There are a number of potential threats facing the species (including habitat alteration by the drastic reduction of freshwater flow of the Colorado River). Its limited range in shallow waters of the upper portion of Mexico's Gulf of California is considered to be the smallest of any marine cetacean.

Although there is some controversy about the seriousness of other potential threats, without a doubt the primary threat facing the species is incidental kills in various fisheries, mainly in several gillnet fisheries. In fact, this is the only well-documented threat to the population, and studies on bycatch have given clear indications that the kills are unsustainable and undoubtedly causing the small population to decline.

The vaquita is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List authority, and has received a great deal of attention within the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group, and the International Whaling Commission's Small Cetacean Subcommittee. There is widespread acceptance within the marine mammal community of the extremely serious situation that the species is in. For many years it has been considered the second-most endangered cetacean species, after the baiji (*Lipotes vexillifer*) of China's Yangtze River.

With the recent discovery that the baiji is functionally-extinct, and probably extinct in absolute terms, the vaquita is now recognized as the most-endangered cetacean species in the world. Based on abundance estimated in 1997, there are estimated to be only about 150 vaquitas remaining. Based on expected levels of decline, this means there is a window of about two years in which to implement solutions to save the species. After that, it will likely be too late.

In recent years, there has been virtually unanimous agreement among researchers and conservationists examining the issue that what is needed to save the species is complete elimination of gill-net mortality. The International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA) has convened three times to discuss the species' situation, and has come to the same conclusion. Some limited progress has been made towards closing down the gillnet fisheries that threaten the vaquita, but not surprisingly this has proven challenging, and many fishermen and fishing collectives have been resistant. It is now clearly seen that the only hope for the species is a program that eliminates gillnets, while at the same time providing economic incentives and aid to the affected fishermen to find alternative sources of income. What is currently needed is the public support to raise the several million US dollars needed to implement the plan.

Current efforts to raise public awareness and conserve the vaquita are being seriously limited by the absence of photo or video images of the animals alive in their natural habitat. Green groups often successfully use images of wildlife to focus their fund-raising efforts and obtain sympathy for endangered species (a clear example is the giant panda, in which images of this large, attractive animal were instrumental in gaining sympathy for its effective con-

servation).

This has been difficult with the vaquita, which is also a large, attractive animal (with a unique appearance, quite different from any of the other five porpoise species). Few people realize this, however, as the best available images are blurry, distant photos showing only a back and dorsal fin (and in one case, the top of the head). There have even been claims from within Mexico that the vaquita is not real - a mythical creature, further hampering conservation efforts. I believe that showing the world what the vaquita looks like, alive and in its natural habitat, will be critical to efforts to raise the funds needed to save the species.

During October and November 2008, the Southwest Fisheries Science Center and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Ecología will use several research vessels to conduct an acoustic survey for the vaquita in the upper Gulf of California, Mexico. The goals of these larger vessels will be mainly to collect data for developing acoustic monitoring methods, and as vaquitas are known to avoid large vessels at great distances, it is not expected that any of them will be able to get close enough to vaquitas to obtain good photos.

With funding from an anonymous donor, I am leading a project to obtain photos of vaquitas. My co-workers and I hope to obtain several high-quality images of vaquitas engaged in a variety of normal activities (i.e., publishable photos). We hope to obtain clear images that show the head and face of these attractive and unique animals, which will be instrumental in garnering sympathy for the cause of their conservation. In addition, we hope to be able to identify individual porpoises from photographs, and therefore to learn more of the species' biology and current population size.

The management implications of this project are potentially profound. It is our belief that the lack of suitable images of living vaquitas is a major stumbling block to saving the species, and we may be able to rectify this situation. We are very optimistic that we will be able to report on a successful field season later this year.

For more information on the vaquita and what you can do to help, please visit [vaquita.org](http://vaquita.org). Contributions should be mailed to the organization's legal office in San Diego: Dassia Way, Oceanside, CA 92056-7433.

## Last-Ditch Effort to Save the Vaquita

Scientists and the Mexican government are working in the late summer of 2008 to protect the vaquita. Mexico will launch a plan to restrict the use of gillnets, the primary source of vaquita deaths. The new plan, the Action Program for the Conservation of the Species Vaquita, was worked out with fishers over the past four years. It calls for buying out boats and helping fishers begin new businesses such as eco-tourism, replacing gillnets with other gear, or compensating fishers for staying out of prime vaquita territory.

In October, a two month international scientific expedition will gather baseline data for what is hoped to lead to the porpoise's ultimate recovery. They will be using a special acoustic device, the T-POD which was developed by an English engineer.

In June, the engineer sent Barbara Taylor of the Southwest Fisheries Center in San Diego, CA an exciting message: The T-POD had picked up sounds of ~~lovely~~ porpoises. What this means is that there are still sufficient numbers of vaquitas to be found via their calls. Researchers hope to determine if the vaquita's numbers are increasing or decreasing. Law enforcement on illegal fishing will be a top priority.

## Stranded Whales Saved by Fishermen in Africa

In Yoff, Senegal, fishermen dragged dozens of stranded pilot whales back out to sea in late May. Unfortunately, at least 20 more died on the beach after coming ashore.

During the night, more than 100 pilot whales, beached themselves at Yoff, a traditional Lebou fishing community on the Cap Vert peninsula, mainland Africa's most westerly point. Fishermen from the area worked through the night to move the animals back to sea from the sloping sandy beach. All of the fishermen were called out to help save the whales, said Iba Dieye, a local fisherman from Yoff. They got about 20 whales back into the water with ropes, their boats and hands. The whales still on the beach were dead.

Hours after the stranding occurred, local adults and children were still trying to haul some of the remaining live whales back into the waves. Curious crowds gathered during the day to view the carcasses of dead animals. Mobile phones were used to take photographs. Children played on the carcasses, dousing them with water to create a slippery slide.

Local fishermen said they would need government help to remove the dead whales from the beach as they feared the rotting carcasses could cause disease and infection. Kabore Alassi, a professor from Dakar's Veterinary School, said "All animal carcasses should be destroyed and shouldn't be eaten. But this is Africa, and if the area is not secured, people are tempted to cut off a piece of flesh, some for their animals, like their dogs, and some to eat themselves."

Some whales carcasses were dragged off. Local experts said a similar mass beaching of whales had occurred at the same spot about 30 years ago, and some residents had fallen ill after eating meat from the dead whales.

"It's like a collective suicide. Even when you push them out, they still keep coming back," said Ali Haidar, president of the Oceanium marine conservation organization in Dakar. "It's something to do with their navigational and orientation systems getting disturbed," he added.

### Baby Whale Australia (continued from page 4)

more innovative strategies for emergency management of abandoned baby whales in any future incidents that may occur on our shores.%



Save The Whales thanks Tom Kieckhefer, a marine ecologist/educator - Save The Whales, for providing the formula for feeding baby whales and dolphins sent to Australia. Tom was involved in the rescue of a young baby humpback in Hawaii more 27 years ago. The baby was stranded at Punalu'u. It was captured and taken to Sea Life Park where it was fed and nurtured for eight days before succumbing to pneumonia

We are grateful for the help of Australian songwriter Vincent Ruello who lives in Sydney. He was our phone contact when we could not get through on the busy phone lines. Vinny offered the assistance of Save The Whales in the form of funds and the whale milk formula forwarded to the National Parks staff.

Whales need help because of ship strikes, pollution, habitat destruction, noise pollution, overfishing, climate change and whaling. Sign petitions, write letters and get involved with government decision-making agencies. Please sign the petition on our website to help the extremely endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. [savethewhales.org](http://savethewhales.org)

## First Gray Whale Reaches Out to Human - 1972

Pachico, a coastal fisherman for 45 years, became the **chosen one**. On a winter day in 1972, Pachico was fishing in San Ignacio Lagoon, Baja, Mexico, when a gray whale approached his small 18 foot wooden panga - a typical Baja open boat similar to a dory. Until that day there had been no known contact between gray whales and man without one or the other ending up dead.

Pachico tried to get away from the whale, but with every attempt the whale would surface next to the panga. Knowing little about whales at the time, Pachico knew the large marine mammal, double the size of his panga, was now in charge. The whale went under the panga. Pachico's only option was to stay still. He was surprised that the whale wasn't showing any signs of aggression, as told by old fishermen tales. The large whale gently rubbed itself against his panga, raised its head a couple feet out of the water right where Pachico was sitting. Frightened but curious, he timidly reached out his hand to the gray whale and touched it with his fingers. To his amazement the whale didn't back away, but instead moved closer to him. He knew that petting the giant was going to be all right. The whale had **chosen Pachico** to be the first human to experience an interspecies relationship. On that winter day, in San Ignacio Lagoon, the gray whale and man began to trust one another.

That day when he returned to the fishing village, Pachico told the story of the friendly gray whale. Everyone in the area thought he was out of his mind. Pachico started taking his friends out in the Lagoon and they soon discovered that what he had told them was true. The word spread and soon visitors, and those wanting to have the same encounter, arrived to experience this wonderful new relationship between man and the gray whales.

The gray whale, hunted and abused by for so many years, had now forgiven man and had reached out for a new and better relationship.

Pachico has been involved in many different projects related to the whales in San Ignacio Lagoon. He has worked with researchers, scientists, and documentary filmmakers. Pachico's mesmerizing experiences with the whales have also been documented in many different books, magazines and films.

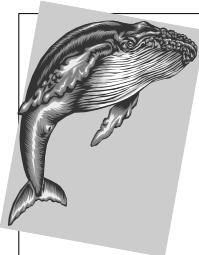
Pachico has resided in San Ignacio Lagoon since 1960. He is married to Carmen Aguilar, who has lived in San Ignacio her entire life. Carmen's father was one of the founders of the Lagoon. Pachico and Carmen have six children; all of them have been raised with the shores of the Lagoon as their front yard.

Pachico still drives his panga with the gray whales. He is always willing to share his knowledge, experiences and great stories of over 30 years of watching the gray whales. Today, Pachico and his family organize and lead tours in San Ignacio Lagoon.

[www.pachicosecotours.com](http://www.pachicosecotours.com) or [www.bajaex.com](http://www.bajaex.com)

## Sing to Save The Whales May 15, 2008

It is gratifying to see more children participating every year from all parts of the world in the annual Sing to Save The Whales Day. This year, the children at the International School in Bremen Germany had a big celebration with music and a visitor from the German Whale & Dolphin Society. Thanks to Chrisna van Mieghem of the Bremen International School for heading up this endeavor.



## Petitions ~ Save The Whales' Website

**North Atlantic Right Whale:** A petition to save the very endangered North Atlantic Right Whales, sponsored by Molly McFadden Prochazka, is on Save The Whales website [www.savethewhales.org](http://www.savethewhales.org).

The North Atlantic Right Whale is in danger of becoming extinct. The waters off St. Mary's, Georgia, near Cumberland Island, are one of the few places that these endangered whales migrate each winter to birth their calves. Researchers believe that as few as 300 to 350 of these rare whales still exist, and that the death of even one whale could lead to their extinction.

The #1 killer of these peaceful giants is collisions with large boats. The whale is not the only species that is seriously threatened. Manatees, turtles, tortoises, many bird species and snakes are also at risk of losing habitats. **This is urgent.** The Georgia Supreme Court will be deciding whether or not to grant these permits in the coming months. Although their decisions are purely law based, they are elected officials and their decisions are affected by public opinion. Please sign and forward the petition to everyone you can think of.

Ms. Prochazka states that: "Cumberland Harbor is an upscale residential development on the coast of St. Mary's, Georgia, located across the Intracoastal Waterway from Cumberland Island. The developers of this community propose the construction of several marinas which would bring more than 800 boats, some as large as 100 feet, to the area. Currently the project is being held up in court, thanks to lawsuits filed by several environmental groups."

"The final decision is in the hands of the Georgia Supreme Court. Since the court makes rulings based purely on law, she made the target of this petition Mr. Mike Flaskey, the CEO of Land Resource Co., the company who developed Cumberland Harbour and want to build the marinas. I have also added the Coastal Marshland Protection Committee and the Board of Natural Resources as targets because if anyone can help stop this, it is these two organizations."

You can read more about this very serious issue by clicking on the links under the petition.

**Humpback Whales:** Cindi Robertson contacted Save The Whales about putting a petition on the website re a building project in the path of migrating humpback whales on Salt Cay, a small island located in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Cindi, on behalf of the Friends of Salt Cay, wants to stop this construction and development, and she is particularly concerned about the ocean and fish habitat.

Plans include an 18-hole golf course and resort, large private estates, new residential areas, condominiums, shops, hotels, and a new marina with a proposed 100 foot wide channel to be cut into the middle of the island. The proposed entrance to this marina will cut through the only road going north to south, potentially damaging and killing corals and fish habitat. The additional boat traffic will compound the problem for whales in this area!

Cindi said in an update that the United Kingdom has sent a Commission of Inquiry to the Turks and Caicos to check into potential fraud. This commission will probably take three months or more. She feels that headway is being made, not only with the petition, but elsewhere. She appreciates wholeheartedly the help of Save The Whales, and says that she couldn't have gotten the over 1,000 names without their help. The petition is still on the website to sign.

## Suit Filed to Save Whales From Ships

Fast ships can be deadly for animals, particularly whales. The Center for Biological Diversity has filed suit against the U.S. Coast Guard for shirking its responsibility to protect endangered whales and other species from ships traveling through their habitat off Southern California.

Last September, at least three endangered blue whales were killed off the California coast by collisions with speeding ships. In the same month, the Center petitioned the administration to limit ship speed in area whale habitat. With no agreement, the Center began a legal crusade to force the Coast Guard to analyze how whales are harmed by ship traffic and take steps to make sure that harm doesn't happen.

## Steve Irwin Widow To Fund Humpback Whale Study

Steve Irwin's (*Crocodile Hunter*) widow, Terri Irwin, has signed an agreement with the Marine Mammal Institute at Oregon State University to fund two humpback whale research projects. Irwin and Bruce Mate, director of the institute, announced the agreement that will send research teams to Alaska and American Samoa.

Terri, an Oregon native, said that "Steve was very passionate about whales, and he believed that, "They are extraordinary creatures and that it is so important that we do everything we can to save them." Mate said Irwin invited him to the Australia Zoo, which she operates, to discuss research collaborations. Irwin is an opponent of killing whales for research, and Mate said the researchers plan to gather their information without injuring or killing whales.

In September, the Oregon State University research team and Australia Zoo will collaborate on a project to tag up to 25 humpback whales near the eastern end of the Aleutian Island chain. The goal is to determine how much the whales intermingle in the feeding area, and track their migration to breeding areas.

The researchers will then head to the South Pacific where the scientists will tag humpback whales near the end of their reproductive season and use satellites to track their spring migration to Antarctic feeding grounds.

"This is a little-studied population of humpback whales," Mate said. "Some of the groups of whales in this region are small and not recovering as well as populations in other areas, so it is important to better understand their movements."

## Protected Marine Area in Hawaii at Risk

President Bush was lauded for doing something for the environment when he designated the world's largest protected marine area in Hawaii in 2006. But the area is filled with tons of debris that drift into the 140,000-square-mile Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument each year, and this is a great threat to marine life.

In 2006, when Bush declared the area a monument and banned trash within it, the administration slashed the cleanup budget for the area by 80 percent. Before the monument designation, an average 102 tons of junk were collected each year. Since then debris removal has fallen to about 35 tons a year.

One Hawaii resident notes that blame is widespread: "We can pick up plastic off the beach from now until the end of time, but unless people stop putting it in the ocean our problem will never go away."

## Gray Whale Costume Enhances WOW™ program

The popular Whales on Wheels WOW™ program has educated over 277,000 students. Presented by Save The Whales, the program has a wonderful new addition, a gray whale costume. It is constructed from foam rubber with blubber as the first layer (similar to a life vest), followed by the outer skin layer with fake barnacles attached to it. Flukes are velcroed on and it is outfitted with fin-like flippers that fit on children's hands. The head has detachable baleen and a blowhole that is vented with two nares (paired bony nasal openings of the skull). The costume was made by Anne Scanlon for the Pacific Cetacean Group in 1999 and was recently donated to Save The Whales.

Tom Kieckhefer and Maris Sidenstecker are the marine biologists and educators for Save The Whales. They bring WOW™ to children in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties on the Central California coast. Both Tom and Maris have great passion for whales and protecting the oceans which enthusiasm they impart to school children. Tom remarks, "It was an action-packed school year and we received many complimentary remarks from teachers. They said that they were thrilled to see the children's



Children touch gray whale baleen.+

*Save The Whales has a new section on its Inspirations website entitled "Heroes." Mr. Chavez's action is the first story.*

*The following story was sent via email from Mr. Chavez's friend, Lino L.*

### Diver Attempts Humpback Whale Rescue in Peru



Alfonso Chavez

On Friday June 20, an adult humpback whale was seen very close to the shore in the Punta Sal beach in the north of Peru, and it was obvious that the whale was heavily entangled with fishing net.

While local fisherman were getting ready to kill the whale and cut it up for food, Alfonso Chavez, an experienced free diver, got close to the whale with the help of his boat captain Jorge. Alfonso dove into the water and the whale was very calm while he started to cut the net with his knife. After working for about two hours, he had cleared the head and lateral fins.

He had almost finished cutting the last part of the net on the whale's tail, when it made a fast move with its tail and hit him on the back of his head. The blow to his head made him unconscious for an instant, but he managed to remove his weight belt and get to the surface. Here, he was rescued and taken to Lima by an ambulance airplane where he spent five days in the hospital.

He was very lucky because he had only suffered damage to a couple of cervical discs. The poor whale could not recover, and the next day the whale was finally sacrificed by the local fisherman and cut into pieces.

We thank Alfonso for his heroic effort.



enthusiasm and that after WOW™ they go to the library to learn even more about whales and other marine mammals.+ Maris (co-founder of Save The Whales) says she knows she has done a good job when the students come up and thank her individually or tell her

what they have done to help animals. It gives her hope for the future to see their awareness and compassion. Tom says that bringing WOW™ is the biggest show and tell. Children listen to the sounds of blue whales, killer whales and humpback whales to help them imagine being in the ocean and communicating over vast distances.

Students enjoy the hands-on approach to learning by looking at whale lice, a sperm whale jawbone,

whale skulls, ribs, baleen and teeth, otter pelts and many other artifacts. Kids learn how they as students can help save marine mammals by picking up litter, recycling, not releasing balloons and cutting up six-pack rings from soda cans. They then tell teachers and parents their conservation messages. WOW™ is funded by contributions, grants, memberships and the sale of whale merchandise.

### International Whaling Commission - continued from page 1

Dr. Hogarth raised concerns about the future of the IWC. Since the last IWC meeting, an intersessional meeting was held to consider the future of the IWC and to find ways to resolve the issues that have polarized a number of debates within the organization. The IWC agreed that it is necessary to:

"Improve the practice and procedures of the Commission; and  
"Have further discussions/negotiations on substantive issues.  
The chair stressed that it is important to make progress, not only for the future of the organization, but for whale conservation. Next year's meeting will be held in Maderia, Portugal.

### Minke Whale Numbers Declining

According to a recent report from Iceland's Marine Research Institute on numbers of minke whales in Icelandic waters, the minke stock has declined by 24 percent since 2001. A whale count from 2001, compiled by aircraft, determined that there were 43,600 minkes in Icelandic waters, but last year's count counted only 10,000 to 15,000 minkes in certain areas, which could be interpreted as a 24 percent decline in the total stock.

Gíslí Víkingsson, one of the authors of the report, said that the matter had been discussed in the Science Committee North Atlantic, and they believe the decline is because minkes have migrated elsewhere for food.

Víkingsson said there have been drastic changes in the waters around Faxaflói Bay where the count was conducted. The main food for minkes (stocks of sand launces and capelins), has been declining. Not only are the numbers of minkes declining, but also there are waning numbers of birds, fish, etc. According to him, there is nothing that suggests that whale hunting has had any effect on the stock.

Arni Finnsson, the chairman of Iceland Nature Conservation Association, says this new data contradicts arguments made by The Icelandic Fishing Vessels Owners (LÍÚ) and several MPs about the necessity to hunt whales to maintain balance in the ocean.

# Giant Squid Found Off Central Coast of California

Researchers dissected what they believe is a giant squid, but are far from answering some of the obvious questions about the dead animal, which was found in June floating about 20 miles off the Central California coast.



Marine biologists from the University of California at Santa Cruz and Hopkins Marine Station, among other institutes, removed tissue samples, checked for parasites and determined the exact length and circumference of the animal at about 16 feet and 4 feet, respectively. An intact giant squid is about 25 feet in length, including its tentacles.

The squid is missing most of the length of its tentacles and part of its mantle. Samples taken from the body may yield groundbreaking new information as to whether or not the squid belongs to the same species as one photographed alive in Japan in 2004.

Results of a genetics test, which will confirm whether it is a giant squid, will not be available for a couple of months, but the scientists are 99 percent certain that it is a giant squid. According to John Field, a fishery biologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Santa Cruz, only four or five have ever been found in California waters. Giant squid are found in all the world's oceans, but are deep-ocean dwellers that are rarely seen.

The giant squid has a distinctive beak and fin that could lead it to be confused only with the colossal squid, an even more exceptional animal. While looking for sharks, Sean Van Sommeran of the Pelagic Shark Research Foundation spotted the floating squid. The squid's missing body parts were probably bitten off by other preda-

tors before or after it floated to the surface the Monterey Bay. Missing were its sex organs so its gender could not be determined. Also missing were the stomach, ink sack, heart, eyes, large parts of the tentacles and mantle.

Nonetheless, the body is considered to be in relatively good condition. "Whole ones that are in this good shape are pretty rare," said Bill Gilly of the Hopkins Marine Station. "It's probably better than anyone's seen in California," Field said. The pieces found weighed about 170 pounds which is less than an intact giant squid intact would weigh.

Gilly said what most fascinated him most about the dissected animal were its chromatophores -- cells in its skin that reflect light and contain pigment. "Unless the animal is almost transparent in light, I don't know what function they could serve," he said. "I'm dying for them to cut it open so I can look in there. Researchers remain uncertain about the cause of death of the animal. Other than the size of the missing pieces, there was little evidence to support the theories. "The flesh is so pliable and water-like that you can't really see teeth marks," said Ken Baltz, an oceanographer for NOAA who works with Field. Giant squid, unlike many other squid species, float when they die. "It really is a mystery in terms of how it got there," Van Sommeran said.

The squid was transported to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in California, where a giant squid expert and curator of the Department of Invertebrate Zoology, will be in charge of the preservation and study of the animal.

**Save The Whales**  
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