

SAVE THE WHALES

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

Humpback Whales

Saving Marine Mammals One Seal at a Time



Humpback photo: Thomas R Kieckhefer

Research scientists, Robert L. Pitman and John W. Durban, were in search of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) in the area from South America to the Antarctic Peninsula. On-board a 65-foot yacht, they were looking for killer whales preying on seals that live on and around sea ice. They hoped to document the killer whales' technique of

swimming side by side, thereby making a wave that could wash a seal off an ice floe where it would be easy prey.

What they saw was more startling. They came upon a pod of 10 killer whales, and in their midst was a pair of agitated, adult-size humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*). The humpbacks were bellowing loudly through their blowholes and slapping the water with their tails and 15-foot flippers.

At first the researchers thought the humpbacks were being attacked, but decided that they were being harassed by the killer whales. Below deck, they reviewed their video footage and found a Weddell seal (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) between the humpback whales and theorized that the seal could be the killer whales' objective.

The killer whales traveled on and came across a crabeater seal (*Lobodon carcinophaga*) on an ice floe. They created a wave that broke up the floe and left the distressed seal on a small piece of ice. As the killer whales moved in, the same humpback pair rushed in and swam around the floe. When they bellowed and thrashed the water, the killer whales journeyed on and left the seal alone on the floe.

A week later, the scientists witnessed a similar event which suggested a somewhat different interpretation. A group of killer whales was attacking a Weddell seal on an ice floe. A pair of large humpbacks had inserted themselves into the conflict. Washed off the ice floe, the exposed and vulnerable seal swam frantically toward the humpbacks.

As it approached the closest humpback, the enormous mammal rolled onto its back, and the 400-pound seal was swept onto the humpback's chest between its flippers. As the killer whales closed in, the humpback arched its chest and lifted the seal out of the water. When water rushing off the whale's chest started to wash the seal into the water, the humpback gave the seal a gentle nudge with its flipper and back onto its chest. After a few moments, the seal left the safety of the humpback's body and swam to a nearby ice floe.

It occurred to the researchers that the aggressive behavior of the killer whales may have triggered a protective maternal response in the humpbacks. Even though they did not have calves at risk, they responded immediately.

Source: Natural History Magazine, Nov 2009 (continued p. 7)

VAQUITA

The Most Endangered Cetacean

The vaquita remains the most-endangered species of marine mammal in the world. It is the smallest of six species of true porpoises with a population estimated at 125-150 individuals. They live in a tiny area in the extreme northern Gulf of California, in Baja California, Mexico. Vaquita means "little cow" in Spanish.

It is listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in the Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in the most critical category at risk of extinction. In recent decades, the very small vaquita population has dropped as gillnets set for fish and shrimp kill more vaquitas than are born annually. They drown after being trapped in the "invisible" gillnets.

The Mexican government has created a nature reserve that covers the upper part of the Gulf of California and the Colorado River delta. In order for it to be effective, the reserve should cover the full range of the vaquita and gillnets should be completely banned from the area. Rigorous enforcement and monitoring must be provided.

The Mexican government has a complicated plan to save the vaquita called the Action Program for the Conservation of the Species.

One of the long-term goals involves buying out fishermen. A system is being developed for deciding who is eligible for compensation. Fishers will need assurances that they will have a viable income and that strict measures are taken against illegal fishing.

Another option would be replacing fishermen's gillnets so that the gear used will have zero bycatch on vaquitas. This means adopting a regulation banning all gillnets and other (continued p. 3)

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Cuvier's Beaked Whale

Ziphius cavirostris
G. Cuvier, 1823
Order: Cetacea
Suborder: Odontoceti
Family: Ziphiidae

DERIVATION: Probably from the Greek *xiphias* for swordfish or *ziphos* for sword, from the Greek *cavus* for hollow, and from the Latin *rostrum* for beak.

Other name: Goosebeaked whale.

In 1823, a French naturalist, Georges Cuvier, mistook a skull fragment for a fossil and described what he believed to be an extinct species of whale. Several decades after his death, it was learned that Cuvier's beaked whale was an existing living whale found in the offshore waters of all the world's oceans.

Note: Beaked whales will be designated as "BW."
1 meter=39.37 inches.

Physical Characteristics: Cuvier's BW have a long body, described as cigar-shaped, with a relatively small head. (There are 21 whales in the Large BW Species.) Maximum length is probably less than 7.5 m; at birth, a calf's length is about 2.7 m. Their beak is short and poorly defined with a smoothly sloping forehead. The beak becomes less distinct with age, while their melon becomes more prominent, even bulbous, in adult males.

The unusual mouthline curves along its length with an upturn at the rear. This strange outline, combined with the profile of the head, produces an appearance that has been compared to a goosebeak.

A distinct feature of adult males are two large, cylindrical teeth located at the tip of the lower jaw; the lower jaw extends beyond the upper. Female teeth are slender and pointed and normally do not pierce the gum. Males have more massive conical teeth that erupt fairly early in life and are not concealed by the upper jaw. Their teeth may be infested by stalked barnacles.

Their skin color varies greatly among individual whales and therefore cannot be used as an identifier. Their color lies between dark gray and rusty brown or fawn colored with lighter areas around the head and belly. As they age, particularly males, the head, neck and back become lighter and some male heads are entirely white. Their eyes are usually surrounded by dark coloration and there may be light crescent-shaped streaks around the eye area. Calves are dark above and light below.

Extensive linear scarring may be present but is more common in males. The cause is assumed to be males fighting for females but this has never been observed. Both sexes often have white oval scars that are most likely inflicted by lampreys or cookie-cutter sharks.

Flukes are reasonably large and a fluke notch is not always present. Dorsal fin is small and falcate and is on the back approximately two-thirds away from the snout tip. "Flipper pockets" are slight depressions where the small, rounded flippers can be tucked and kept flush with the body, presumably for hydrodynamics.



Cuvier's Beaked Whale, Monterey Bay, CA
From video by Tom Kieckhefer, October 2009

View Cuvier's BW on YouTube taped by Save The Whales' educator/researcher Tom Kieckhefer when he and fellow researchers, Thomas A. Jefferson and Mark Cotter, unexpectedly came upon six Cuvier's BW in Monterey Bay, CA. Share their excitement at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3FJW0Lf_A

Life Cycle: Sexual maturity occurs at around 6.2 m. Seasonality of calving is unknown. Their life history is not well known.

Feeding: They seem to prefer feeding in deep water on deep-sea squid, as well as fish and some crustaceans. Apparently, they feed near the bottom and in the water column.

Behavior: A Cuvier's BW may raise its flukes as it begins its deep vertical dive which may last up to 40 minutes. Their blow may be low, slightly forward and to the left. It is often inconspicuous, even after a long dive.

Threats and Status: They are a somewhat abundant marine mammal with widespread distribution found in small groups of 2-7, but often seen alone. Never a target of commercial whalers, they have sometimes been taken in other fisheries: Caribbean Islands, Indonesia, Taiwan, Peru and Chile. A few were taken in previous years by the Baird's BW fishery off the coast of Japan. Occasionally Cuvier's have been trapped in deep water drift gillnets. Killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) are probably a threat to Cuvier's. They are among the most abundant of all BW.

Sonar Testing: Mass mortalities of Cuvier's BWs have occurred after Naval sonar exercises in many parts of the world: Bahamas, Caribbean, Canary Islands and the Mediterranean. They appear to be particularly vulnerable to testing, and the syndrome is apparently induced by exposure to mid-frequency sonar signals and largely affects deep, long-duration, repetitive-diving species like all BWs. There does not seem to be enough evidence to isolate Cuvier's BW from the other species of BW, and larger mortalities may be attributable to a higher abundance of this species in the affected areas.

About four hours after international naval exercises began using mid-frequency sonar in the Canary Islands, a mass stranding of whales began. Macroscopically, whales had severe, diffuse congestion and hemorrhage, particularly around acoustic jaw fat, ears, brain and kidneys.

There may be an increase in bubbles in the blood causing decompression sickness (such as occurs in decompression sickness with human divers) when returning to the surface from a deep dive.

Severely injured whales died or became stranded and died due to cardiovascular collapse during beaching, apparently induced by exposure to mid-frequency sonar signals.

Sources: *Marine Mammals of the World*, Thomas A. Jefferson, Marc A. Webber, Robert L. Pittman. To order this book, go to: http://savethewhales.org/links_books.html
Whales and Dolphins, Stephen Leatherwood and Randall R. Reeves

***The parenchyma are the functional parts of an organ in the body. This is in contrast to the stroma, which refers to the structural tissue of organs, namely, the connective tissues.**

entangling nets, or offering fishermen compensation for staying out of prime vaquita territory. However, this would put them at a disadvantage with fishers still using gillnets.

Some fishermen will be paid to not fish and use gillnets in the 1200 square kilometers of core vaquita habitat. Since there are illegal fishers in the area, law enforcement is a top priority.

However, fishermen are not the only population impacted by a buyout. People in the area pack and clean the fish and shrimp, truckers deliver them to the U.S, and they are a highlight of the local restaurant business.

As can be seen, this is a very complex problem and the poor economy adds to its difficulties. Some funds for vaquita projects were diverted by the swine flu epidemic.

In September 2009, VivaVaquita.org was conceived by concerned researchers and educators from three nonprofit organizations: Cetos Research Organization, Save The Whales and American Cetacean Society, Monterey Bay Chapter. The website explains how you can help this unusual animal. You may view the vaquita from last year's successful excursion to Baja to obtain photographs of the porpoise at <http://savethewhales.org/vaquita.html>

Please join the campaign to Save The Vaquita at <http://vivavaquita.org>.

¡VIVA Vaquita!

If you want to sign up for Save The Whales' Action Alerts, go to <http://savethewhales.org/>. Under the whale logo, click on **JOIN E-NEWS LIST**.

LET LOLITA GO! Orca languishes in captivity.

In August 1970, Lolita was captured when the entire community of about 85 resident orcas was driven into Penn Cove, Whidbey Island, Washington State. She was born in approximately 1966. During the capture process, four baby whales and a young mother were drowned, and seven very young whales were sold into the entertainment industry. Of at least 45 whales removed or killed during the capture process, there is only one survivor, Lolita. She lives a solitary life in a tank at Miami Seaquarium where she has been alone since 1980, when a young male from her community of resident orcas died in the tank he shared with her.

Whether her tank meets federal standards is heavily disputed. In April 1996, Lolita's stadium was closed for a long period of time for repair. In November 2005, the park had to close again after heavy damage during the hurricane season.

A demonstration was held on Saturday January 30, 12-2PM in front of the Miami Seaquarium in support of Lolita's retirement and to protest the Seaquarium's refusal to allow Lolita to be placed in a protected bay pen in Washington State. This is part of an active campaign to return Lolita to her home waters and, if possible, reunite her with her family.

A peaceful demonstration will be held on a Saturday of every month (see schedule). If you are in the Miami area, you can show your support by attending a demonstration. For more information, check:

<http://www.orcanetwork.org/captivity/captivity.html>

Feb 13
March 27
April 24
May 15
June 26

Ways to Improve our World For Ourselves and Planet Earth

Education - School children are more aware than adults of pollution and its dangers. Through Save The Whales-Whales on Wheels (WOW™) programs, we have brought our programs to 285,000 school children. In the Monterey Bay area, we have two new programs (see page 7 for information on WOARP™). Our second new program concerns Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and endangered species.

Plastics - This photo is a dramatic and heart-wrenching display of a Laysan Albatross on Green Island in Kure Atoll in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. An adult Laysan Albatross might feed its



Photo by Claire Fackler, NOAA

chick regurgitated food consisting of squid beaks, pumice and lots of plastics. When a chick dies, what is often found is a stomach of death. This photo of a Laysan Albatross chick depicts 306 pieces of plastic debris.

Some of the items are: a bottle cap, red lighter, and a 6-inch oyster spacer from the commercial fishing industry. Help save wildlife and protect our oceans by keeping plastics out of

waterways. What has been learned is that not enough is being done to recycle or dispose of plastic bottle caps in order to keep them out of waterways and thereby out of animals' stomachs. People are still purchasing individual plastic bottles of water when a reusable stainless steel container may be purchased for as little as \$4. Decline plastic bags when you shop. The best earth-friendly shopping method is to re-use your paper bags or bring cloth bags.

Energy Conservation - Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) may last up to 13 times longer than incandescent bulbs and use 75% less electricity to produce the same amount of light. CFLs are more expensive but provide savings in the long run. You could purchase them in bulk with your friends or neighbors. One problem is that the bulbs must be disposed of as Hazardous Waste.

Food and Gardening - Even if you have a small plot of land, you can grow vegetables or plant them in containers. For containers, you need good potting soil and a suitable spot that gets at least six hours of sun daily. Tomatoes, beans, eggplants and peppers do well in pots as do strawberries. If possible, visit your local Farmer's Market. Buying food that hasn't traveled is fresher and hasn't consumed a lot of fuel to arrive at your table.

Transportation - Vespas and other scooters are increasingly popular, with 75 MPG and the ability to zip around cars stuck in traffic. Many companies will match employees up with people in the same vicinity for car pooling.

Songs to Heal Our Planet Released



We are pleased with the CD Save The Whales produced *Songs To Heal Our Planet: Children Singing to Save The Earth*, a CD for children comprising 16 original songs to raise awareness of a variety of environmental issues. It helps children learn more about the natural world in a fun way.

The CD has received many inspiring reviews that you can view at <http://savethewhales.org/books-cds.html>.

Whale Music Composers

In conjunction with SONGS, two composers, Vinny Pop and Scott Lucia, lent their musical talents to Save The Whales. Their songs are on our website as downloadables. Please take a listen to *Make A Friend Out of Me*, by Vinny. He comes from *The Land Down Under*, and is a great voice for the whales as well as people.

Vinny Pop was born on August 18, 1960 as Vincent Ruello. He began his artistic career as a child actor and performer at the age of 7. His first band was formed when he was 14 and many school concerts followed.

Vinny says, "I loved The Beatles as a child and still do." At age 26, he had his first hit in 1986 with the song *Halley's Comet*. Channel 10 in Sydney aired *Halley's Comet* at the time, and even created the film clip using space footage from the NASA space ship *Giotto* which was following the comet.

His then-band was called *Drops Of Light* and he wrote the song. The second independent release was a song called *Never Knew The Way*, which was released worldwide in video discs and a dance track in 1988. This song was a hit prediction on Video Hits 1989. Vincent went solo in 1991 after a moment of epiphany, and decided to dedicate his musical talents to help his community and the world.

In 1993, he approached the Australian Government because he wanted to assist with prisoner rehab in jails. Vinny produced and auditioned inmates for the charity album called *Hope Album*. In late 1993, it was signed to Warner Chappel Music, an affiliate of Warner Bros Music. Extensive media coverage followed and programs were set up around Australia - where they are still used - in order to allow inmates to release pain by utilizing recordings of their words and music.

Scott Lucia is a multi-instrumentalist songwriter from New Jersey who plays the drums in the NJ cover band, *Skull Cramps*. Scott is a physical fitness buff, an art illustrator, and enjoys traveling a great deal. While whale watching off the coast of Vancouver Island in the summer of 2005, he discovered his love for whales.

You can hear his recording *The Whale Song* as a downloadable at <http://savethewhales.org/books-cds.html>.



Scott would like to give special thanks to Pete Pineyro and Wendy J. Horn for their invaluable contributions to the recording of *The Whale Song*.



Vinny Pop

In Memory of

Danielle Christine Martin

May 9, 2009

Danielle passed away in her home in Escondido, CA, May 9, 2009 at the age of 32. Danielle will be greatly missed by her friends, co-workers and family. As a young girl, Danielle grew to love whales. Until her untimely death, it was one of her greatest passions in life.

The many contributions in her memory will support education and other outreach programs for children.

FUNDRAISERS EXTRAORDINAIRE

Valhalla Middle School in Valhalla, NY, raised \$76 to protect the whales' habitat. Students in the 7th and 8th grade of the Environmental Club raised these funds at their last bake sale. Congratulations and thank you to all the members for their hard work.

AGE NO BARRIER

Shelagh Smith of Rockville, MD, not to be outdone by youth, raised several hundred dollars at her 60th birthday celebration in Maryland.

Shelagh became a member, obtained contributions and brought in four additional members. Thank you, Shelagh, who loves *all things whale*.



Maris Sidenstecker II
Alex Verron, Monterey Bay

Alex Verron of Connecticut recently visited the Monterey Bay area and we had an opportunity to meet him in person. For several years, Alex held fundraisers at his home in Wilton, assisted by his parents, and raised several thousand dollars. Thank you for

your invaluable contributions.

Daniel Ramkumar of Champaign, IL asked for donations to Save The Whales for his 10th birthday and raised an impressive \$100. Thank you Daniel for your generosity. His mother said that *it gives their family a great sense of joy to know that they make a difference*. Japhia Ramkumar, Daniel's mother
October 2009

Helping Whales Through eBay Giving Works

You can help whales and other marine mammals by selling -- or shopping -- on

<http://www.ebaygivingworks.com/nonprofit-info.html>

Sellers can designate Save The Whales as the beneficiary for from 10% up to 100% of the sale price. Shoppers can find a variety of treasures, from books to jewelry. Sellers can get rid of "mistakes" or things no longer needed or wanted and help Save The Whales.

Find out more about selling your stuff, as that could mean a lot to Save The Whales.

BLUE WHALE STRUCK BY RESEARCH VESSEL

Female Killed off Mendocino, CA Coast



A 70-foot female blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) was struck and killed off the Mendocino California County coast on October 19, 2009. A research vessel, *Pacific Star*, contracted by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to map the sea floor for the California Ocean Protection Council didn't have a valid permit a well-known sea surveyor contends.

The death of the whale brought angry retorts from environmentalists, fishermen and seaweed harvesters in the area. One of the main reasons the boat was mapping the ocean floor was to gather data used to work out Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) under the widely-criticized Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) process.

Steve Sullivan, Vice-President of Sea Surveyor, Inc., said the R/V *Pacific Star*, a vessel from Alaska, was surveying without the required permit to conduct geophysical surveys in California waters at the time that it struck the blue whale. He claimed that their permit had expired on September 30 and the new permit was not approved by the State Lands Commission until October 22, which was three days after the whale was killed.

Sullivan has complained repeatedly to the Ocean Protection Council that the R/V *Pacific Star* is not conducting their surveys in compliance with requirements from the California State Lands Commission to avoid adverse effects on marine mammals. He pointed out that the whale would not have been killed if the boat's operators had been in compliance with regulations that they are required to follow under state law.

- Geophysical survey boats equipped with multi-beam sonar or sidescan sonar are not allowed to operate at night in order to avoid collisions with whales and other marine mammals.
- Operators are required to hire a trained marine mammal observer to be onboard during geophysical surveys to make sure that the boat doesn't endanger or hit whales and other marine mammals.
- The State Lands Commission requires operators to shut down the survey if the boat is near a whale.

"The State, particularly the Ocean Protection Council, must stop funding illegal surveys in California waters," said Sullivan. Activists in the area where the whale was killed are asking for a full, independent and impartial investigation, particularly in light of Sullivan's revelation that the boat didn't have the necessary permit.

While environmentalists are alarmed over this killing by a boat being used by an agency whose job is to protect marine life, ship strikes around the world are on the rise.

Source: www.YubaNet.com by Dan Bacher

Information on Ship Strikes and Possible Causes

The blue whale may not have been able to detect and avoid the approaching vessel because it may not have been able to distinguish
continued on pg. 6

Beluga Saves Human

A diver who was drowning and sinking to the bottom of a pool at Polar Land in Harbin, northeast China, was saved by a beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*). Yang Yun, age 26, was one of the applicants taking part in a free-diving contest. She was one of seven finalists hoping to be selected for a job working with the whales. Participants had to sink to the bottom of the pool amidst the belugas and stay there as long as possible.

She dove to the bottom of the icy 20-foot deep aquarium without diving gear. While attempting to surface, she ran out of breath and her legs became paralyzed with cramps.

Yang thought she was going to die among the belugas, as she struggled to move her legs and kick to the surface. She began to choke and sink and thought that maybe it was over for her.

But then she felt an incredible force under her driving her to the surface. Mila was the "incredible force," a beluga whale that had noticed her distress. Using her sensitive nose, Mila drove Yang carefully to the surface to the astonishment of observers, and an underwater photographer who captured the entire incident on film.

Mila realized the diver was in trouble before the human participants, and Yang possibly owes Mila her life.

Southern Resident Killer Whales

The low numbers of the Southern Resident killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) in the Puget Sound area off Washington State, may be the result of vessel traffic. This distinct population, listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), consists of just 85 whales. For more information on orcas, go to:



<http://savethewhales.org/orca.html>

To give them more protection, new rules have been proposed regarding ship traffic. If adopted, these regulations could take effect as early as May 2010.

According to a NOAA report, vessel traffic would be curtailed by:

- Prohibiting vessels from approaching an orca any closer than 600 feet.
- Forbid vessels from intercepting or parking in the path of a whale.
- Establish a one-half mile wide no-go zone along the west side of San Juan Island from May 1 through the end of September, when generally no vessels would be allowed. Active commercial fishing, cargo vessels in shipping lanes, government and research vessels would be excepted. Landowners accessing their private property would have limited exceptions under the no-go zone.

Barry Thom, acting head of NOAA's Northwest regional office in Seattle, WA, said, "The idea here is to give these remarkable animals even more real, meaningful protection. Without it, we would undercut the hard work we are all doing to recover the species by improving the sound's water quality and recovering salmon, the killer whale's primary food."

Taiji Dolphin Hunting Season Continues



Dolphins are being killed in Taiji, Japan, despite all of the publicity surrounding this cruel yearly event generated by the movie, *"The Cove."* Some media outlets have reported that the slaughter stopped but this is not the case.

The announcement that the killing of many dolphins, including bottlenose, had ended is seen as

a publicity stunt by Japan to reassure the world that hunting had ended. It was short-lived, and bottlenose dolphins continue to be hunted along with many other dolphin species.

This is the world's largest dolphin slaughter and it has been going on for more than 400 years although the drive fishery has only happened in the past 70 years. A drive fishery is fishermen pursuing pods of dolphins across the water while banging metal poles together beneath the water to confuse their hypersensitive sonar. Then, the exhausted animals are driven into a cove where they are surrounded by nets to prevent their escape. In Taiji alone, 1,500 dolphins are killed each year, while Japan issues 23,000 permits annually to fisherman around the country's shores.

With the addition of the capture of dolphins for aquariums and swim-with-dolphin programs, the value of the animals greatly increased. The youngest and healthiest dolphins are selected for sale to aquaria and swim-with-dolphins programs. Public support of these programs sustains this cruelty.

This year's hunting season ends in March. *The Cove's* producers are raising funds so that the film may be translated, and the 126 million people of Japan can learn about the yearly slaughter.

CALIFORNIA BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS UPDATE

The California coastal bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are truly coastal and live their lives near the coast. This group is generally considered distinct with about 450 to 500 individuals. About 200 of these dolphins spend a lot of time in Monterey Bay, and up to 120 animals live in the area on a daily basis. They may be seen from shore in the surf zone.

Most of the dolphin's dorsal fins have unique markings making it easy to track over time. Some of the animals that have been followed are over 40 years old; they can live up to 60 years.

Living so close to the shore, California bottlenose dolphins can be affected by coastal contaminants. Dead strandings of this dolphin species have alarmingly high concentrations of PCBs and DDT.

To make significant findings, research needs to be done on living dolphins in their natural habitat. Such research could also be helpful to others, including the human population. Recent findings reveal that the California bottlenose population is suffering a high rate of skin disease which could be related to near-shore contamination.

This is an area of concern for Dr. Daniela Maldini, who has been studying bottlenose dolphins for over 15 years. This has enabled her to put together a catalog for identification of individual members of this group. Funding is needed to continue her research and analysis of skin samples from the affected dolphins to determine what is causing their skin lesions. Daniela Maldini, Ph. D., CEO and Chief Scientist, Okeanis Research and Conservation for a Sustainable Ocean. More information may be found on her website: www.okeanis.org

MONK SEAL PUP BORN ON OPEN BEACH

An event of great symbolic and conservation importance took place on September 22, 2009 in the Cabo Blanco Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) colony when a pup was born on an open beach. Over the years, this seal colony had been driven off beaches by harassment and had begun using marine caves in which to haul out and breed. This colony is the largest aggregation of this species that still survives in the world, and there are no records of such a birth on an open beach in many decades. The pup is a female and is in good condition.

One of the main set of actions of the Mediterranean Monk Seal in the Eastern Atlantic developed by the governments of Spain, Portugal, Morocco and Mauritania was to "promote the occupation of beaches as breeding and resting habitats."

For the last nine years, under the guidelines established by the Action Plan, the protection of breeding caves and vicinities by the CBD-Habitat project has been intense. Efforts have been made to reduce the disturbances caused by gooseneck barnacle pickers, fishermen, and the threat of illegal setting of artisan fishing gears in the area. After years of continuous efforts, monk seals have begun to progressively re-colonize open beaches of the protected area for hauling out.

The use of open beaches that took place on September 22 is seen as a beginning of a new conservation path for this colony. The birth took place in a beach located a few hundred meters south of one of the main breeding caves.

This fact indicates progressive recovery of the population, which in 1998 was estimated to have around 100 individuals; today it is almost at 200. This high increase in pup production has produced almost 50 pups per year being born in the colony. Five years ago, pup production was 24. Although the situation is still very critical and fragile, these last events fill us with hope for the future of this population and the species.

Pablo Fernandez de Larrinoa
Programa de conservación de la foca monje
en Cabo Blanco, Fundación CBD-Habitat
Nieremberg 8, bajo A, 28002 Madrid SPAIN

Ship Strikes and Possible Causes *(continued from page 5)*

ambient noise, like other shipping noise in the area and/or the multibeam echo sounder (MBES) they were using that transmits sound. Even though MBES operate in the 70 to 120 kHz frequency range at > 250 dB there can be harmonics associated with the echoes that might have masked the survey vessel's noise range. Also, vessels generate higher noise levels toward the stern than near the bow, so the chances of detection are greater behind the ship than in front. In addition, vessel noises are not as loud near the surface as they are 5 to 10 meters beneath it because the water surface reflects sound waves (Terhune and Verboom, 1999).

Known as the Lloyd mirror effect, it is stronger in the low-frequency range, in calm sea states, and when the source and/or receiver are near the surface (Richardson *et al.*, 1995). Therefore, the whale might have started surfacing in front of the vessel's acoustic shadow and/or at or near the surface where the whale might have been less likely to hear the vessel.

Thomas R. Kieckhefer, M.Sc., Marine Ecologist & Educator

Monterey County Fair

By Tom Kieckhefer, Save The Whales' Educator

The 73rd Annual Monterey County Fair, Aug. 12 -16, was held at the Monterey County Fairgrounds, Monterey, CA, celebrating the theme, "Reel in the Fun." Save The Whales had a very special educational exhibit in The Maritime Hall. along with several other organizations.

Tom Kieckhefer, Robin Lee and Ashley Duquette from Save The Whales had a wonderful time with the students participating in a private tour on Kid's Day and School Tour Day. Many students gathered around to listen and match the sounds they heard to photographs of marine mammals at our new Marine Mammal Communication Booth. In addition, the plethora of hands-on marine mammal artifacts such as baleen and marine mammal skulls, and views of blubber, krill, and whale lice captured their attention.

The students learned about the problems of plastic, oil, and storm drain pollution, as well as the concept of noise pollution that marine mammals face by listening to



sounds of commercial ships and "pings" of Navy sonar. I thought that the students were very engaged and interested in all of the topics presented to them. Robin and Ashley each brought their special knowledge and interpretations. Their presence was extremely important during times when many students were gathered around our table.

Along with other organizations, everyone felt it was a very rewarding and educational experience for the students, and we were amazed with the many good questions they asked. Some students even proposed solutions to some of the environmental problems whales, dolphins, fishes and other marine life face in our backyard, the Monterey Bay. We felt reassured that the future generation of students are very aware and well on their way to becoming the future protectors of oceans and marine life.

We also felt rewarded by their energy and enthusiasm. Educational activities that engage and excite students are the kind of events that fulfill our purpose and mission as a nonprofit organization: *to educate children and adults about marine mammals, their environment and their preservation.*

Save The Whales

Save The Whales

New Educational Program - WOARP

Whale of a Rhythm Program (WOARP) is a new program that will explore human relationship with whale and dolphin communication for grades 1- 6 through the expression of rhythm, movement, sound and pattern. Students will journey into the world of whale and dolphin rhythm-based communication. Participants will be guided in a hands-on exploration of activities using drums and other percussion instruments to cooperatively imitate, call and respond, and play along with cetacean songs' rhythms, tempos and patterns. Noise pollution recordings will demonstrate the need for each student to deliver their unique pattern of communication and determine if they are able to hear it above the man-made ocean noise. Participants will learn the importance of whale and dolphin communication, their conservation, and the threats of noise pollution in the oceans.



FIN WHALE KILLED IN BOAT COLLISION with CRUISE SHIP

A female fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) was found lodged on the bow of a gigantic cruise ship, as it was preparing to dock in Vancouver, Canada.



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Princess Cruise Lines, owner of the *Sapphire Princess*, issued a statement that read in part: "We were shocked and saddened by this discovery, and sincerely regret the circumstances which led to the whale's death."

The statement said that the company had not heard of any whale sightings in the area and have "strict whale avoidance procedures in place when our ships are in the vicinity of marine life." The Canadian Coast Guard and Department of Fisheries were notified and the 70-foot long mammal was moved to the Institute of Ocean Sciences for examination. The fin whale is second in size to the largest whale, the blue.

Early results from the 7-hour necropsy procedure revealed that the whale could have been ill. There was no food in her stomach, and she had a thin layer of blubber. According to Paul Cottrell, marine mammal coordinator for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it is unknown if the whale died from the impact of the ship or was already dead when struck.

Threats to whales include entanglement in fishing gear, hunting, reduced prey and habitat degradation. According to the [Large Whale Ship Strike Database](#), injuries and deaths from ship collisions are a "significant threat" to whales, with fin whale strikes being the highest. Burial was at sea.

Humpback Rescue Operations *(continued from p. 1)*

Robert L. Pitman, since writing the article on his experiences with humpback whales assisting seals in trouble, has heard reports of humpbacks interceding on behalf of sea lions, minke whales and gray whales in the Northern Hemisphere. He is looking for further documentation on this type of behavior.

He can be contacted at: robert.pitman@noaa.gov

Jane Lubchenko, marine ecologist and environmental scientist, is the ninth Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). At a recent conference in Moss Landing, CA, Dr. Lubchenko said that Congresspersons want to hear from their constituents and that not enough people are voicing their concerns and opinions. Link to senators and representatives from <http://savethewhales.org/senators.html>

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Winter 2010 Newsletter



California Sea Otters

It appears that the California Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) may be struggling again. Recently, its numbers had begun to rebound from the ruinous fur trade, but for the second year in a row, its numbers have gone down. A census released in July 2009 by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) suggested that recovery could take longer to achieve and be less definite than once believed as the population slipped.

Tim Tinker, a USGS research biologist works out of the Santa Cruz CA Field Station in Monterey Bay. He said, "We still have some ways to go before we say this is a species that's not threatened."

The 2009 census count reveals 2,654 southern sea otters living along California's Central coast. International law stopped the hunt for sea otters in 1911 at which time they were thought to be extinct. While building the Bixby Bridge, Big Sur CA, workers discovered about 50 sea otters along California's Central Coast. While the current numbers are a large improvement, the 2009 population is down 3.8 percent from last year's.

Prior to this year's census, there had been an increase in the otter population over the past two decades. It was hoped that the southern sea otter could be removed from the endangered species list but that is not likely at present.

Researchers attribute the fall in numbers to increased disease and immunity problems. These are caused by ocean pollutants such as DDT, heavy metals, and other stressors on their health such as lack of food or changes in the near-shore environment. USGS scientists say that they are trying to locate the most pressing problems impacting the California sea otter. Since the areas surrounding much of the otters' habitat in Monterey Bay is agricultural, coastal communities need to better protect the otter's habitat and reduce urban and agricultural runoff. Much of their life is spent in the water where they can dive up to 300 feet when searching for food. Coastal kelp forests provide resting places.

The sea otter diet consists of abalone, mussels, clams, snails, sea urchins and other marine species. Every day, they eat approximately 25% of their weight. They use rocks or other tools to pry shellfish from rocks and pound them open.

Save The Whales spends much of its time and resources educating children about the dangers of contaminants in urban runoff. Just a small drop of oil on sea otter fur could cause it to freeze to death, as they do not have blubber to keep their bodies warm.

Length: California sea otters: 4 feet; northern sea otters are slightly larger.

Weight: 45 lbs (females); 65 lbs (males). Northern sea otters can reach up to 100 pounds.

Lifespan: 10-15 years (males); 15-20 years (females).

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