

NOVEMBER 2006

WHALE *watch*

Inside:

Update on
Whaling
page 3

Kid's Corner
page 6

A Day of
Research
page 7



Responsible
WILDLIFE WATCHING **page 4**


WDCS
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

what's news with WHALES



Cover Photo: Charlie Phillips

**THE BEST WHALE
AND DOLPHIN
WATCHING TRIPS
INSPIRE AND AID
CONSERVATION, THE
WORST CAN PUT
THESE SENSITIVE
ANIMALS AT RISK.**

Dear Friends,

Our anti-whaling team has a tough job ahead of them. As you read this, the whaling nations are making serious efforts to revive the demand for whale meat. With your support we will be able to stop pro-whaling countries from changing laws. On page three, you can read the latest update.

On page four, you can read about Dolphin SMART, our program that educates boaters about safe operation around dolphins. If you are planning a trip to Florida to see wildlife, ask your tour operator if they are Dolphin SMART approved.

In the adopters only section of our website at whales.org, you can check the sighting updates. Your password is always on the back page of your newsletter.

The staff members who work tirelessly in the background to handle customer service, process adoptions, ship merchandise, write and publish the newsletter, sometimes get to step outside and get a reminder of the importance of what they do. On page seven, you can read about their day out with me.

As always, we appreciate your financial support to save the whales. Without your help there would be no laws, no programs for education, no voice for these majestic creatures. On page eight you will find so many other ways that you and your friends can help whales and dolphins.

Sincerely,

Regina Asmutis-Silva
Senior Biologist



WHALING

WDCS fears that the whaling industry could be given a boost by a forthcoming decision in the European Union whether to add a tariff to imports of cosmetic ingredients from the jojoba plant. If prices for jojoba rise, the European cosmetic industry could turn its attention again to spermaceti (from whale oil) which is virtually identical. WDCS has launched a massive campaign against the tariff, which you can find on our website at whales.org .



WILD DOLPHINS

WDCS is working to end the dolphin drive hunts that occur annually in a few villages in Japan. These hunts start in the fall and endure through the spring. Up to 3,000 dolphins may be taken in these hunts, where they are brutally slaughtered for their meat or captured alive for zoos and aquariums throughout Asia.

On September 20th, WDCS joined international animal welfare and conservation groups across the globe to participate in a Day of Protest against the dolphin drive hunts. This month a WDCS representative will be traveling to Japan to meet with officials and facilities to continue our efforts to stop these inhumane hunts.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

One of the many ways you can help make the world a better place for marine mammals is to volunteer. We need local volunteers in the office but we also need help with research, copy writing and web editing which can be done remotely.

If you are interested in donating your time, contact us at:

lori.keleher@wdcs.org

or **508-548-0648**. We will be happy to send you an application.

WHALING



Photo: Mark Votier

By Sue Fisher, Director of Policy

The last meeting of the International Whaling Commission closed with the dramatic declaration by a new majority of pro-whaling countries that the whaling moratorium is unnecessary and should be overturned. Events in the real world since then point in a very different direction. As this update illustrates, demand for whale meat is falling all over the world. However, the whaling nations are making serious efforts to revive demand or find new markets.

A powerful whaling lobby in Norway demanded that the government increase whaling quotas in 2006 from 796 to 1052. But fewer whaling boats put to sea this summer than in previous years and they only caught 542 animals. The hunt had to be suspended twice because buyers could not sell the meat. Warehouses were full and unwanted blubber was dumped at sea. Whalers blamed the weather and high fuel costs for the shortfall and are still asking for 1500 whales next year. But government officials who have to defend Norway's whaling to the rest of the world, are furious with the whalers for the shortfall and the embarrassing revelation that the market is saturated.

Japan too has problems selling all the whale meat it catches. It expanded its Antarctic hunt this year to include 10 fin whales and will increase this again by 40 more fin whales and 50 humpbacks in 2007. Yet consumer demand is low, warehouses are full, and prices are falling.



Photo: Finback\WDCS

Similarly, although Iceland took more minke whales this year than in 2005, its domestic market is at a stand still. The government announced that it will be exporting meat to the Faroe Islands, a territory of Denmark. WDCS believes that this trade will violate international law and will challenge it.

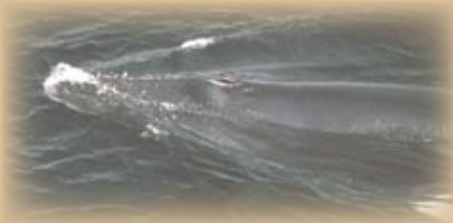


Photo: Minke\WDCS

Meanwhile, Iceland hijacked a recent meeting of a technical committee of CITES, the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species**. Iceland demanded that the 'Animals Committee' re-examine whether a North Atlantic stock of fin whales qualifies for the maximum protection that CITES can provide. They threatened to bring a proposal to remove that protection at the next meeting of CITES parties in June 2007 if the review was not conducted. Shockingly the committee agreed to the review and the US government offered to conduct it jointly with Iceland.



Photo: CITES\WDCS

It is clear that Norway and Japan, as well as Iceland, are desperate to resume international trade in whale products and to find new markets. We expect them to bring multiple proposals to the 2007 meeting of the Parties to CITES – to overturn the ban on trade. WDCS leads a coalition of NGO's from all over the world that work on trade issues. Together we have been successful in defeating similar proposals at the last five CITES meetings. We will be there again in force next year fighting for the ban to be upheld.

For years, WDCS has focused on Greenland's unsustainable hunts of narwhals whose ivory tusks enter international trade, mainly as tourist souvenirs. The Greenland Home Rule Government has taken some steps to improve the dire situation of this species, including setting hunting quotas for the first time in 2004. This brought hunting levels down from over 600 a year, but the numbers killed are still far higher than experts recommend. They believe the population cannot sustain removals of more than 135 a year. The government claims to be "gradually reducing" the quotas, but hunters regularly exceed those quotas. This means that Greenland can claim that quotas are falling, but the reality is that catches are not.

Earlier this year, Greenland acknowledged that its trade of narwhal products was probably unsustainable and imposed a ban on exports. Yet it continues to allow souvenir shops to sell ivory accompanied by permits that were issued before the ban came into effect. WDCS intends to challenge this.

Greenland is a popular tourist destination for Americans. Please report to WDCS if you see narwhal products for sale to tourists in Greenland's gift shops. And please do not buy any. They are beautiful, but not only does US law forbid the import of marine mammal products, your purchase would contribute to the demise of a species.

PROMOTING 'RESPONSIBLE' WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING

If you have ever seen whales and dolphins in their natural environment, you can't fail to be moved and feel the importance of protecting them. This is why at WDCS we work so hard to develop responsible whale and dolphin watching around the world.

Whale and dolphin watching can do so much more than inspire us with awe and respect for these beautiful animals. It can also provide a positive commercial alternative to whaling and capturing live whales and dolphins for public display.

In addition to working within the Watchable Wildlife Consortium to promote general marine mammal viewing guidelines, WDCS has assisted in the development of two programs in the United States. These programs are making a real impact on whale and dolphin conservation through the education of commercial tour operators and the general public, by promoting and rewarding responsible viewing behavior.

DOLPHIN SMART

By Courtney Vail, Campaigns

WDCS, NMFS and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary set up the Dolphin SMART program in the Florida Keys to safeguard wild bottlenose dolphins in this busy tourist area. The framework and code of conduct has been developed with the input from interested dolphin tour operators in the Keys and other stakeholders. This program promotes responsible stewardship of the wild dolphins through education, training and recognition for commercial tour operators who voluntarily follow the Dolphin SMART code of

conduct. Other components essential to this program include field research, monitoring for compliance and public outreach through marketing and educational materials.

There are around 40 commercial operators throughout the Key West that target a relatively small area for their dolphin watching activities. Many have offered swimming with wild dolphins as part of their tour. Because there are no limits to the number of dolphin watching operators in the Keys, the resident group of dolphins can easily become disturbed and harassed by a large number of boats in the same area.

Just as it is illegal and unwise to feed wild dolphins in the United States, it is also potentially dangerous to approach wild dolphins. Operators who learn and practice the code of conduct will be able to advertise their participation in the program. The objective is to teach and encourage methods of dolphin observing that do not involve befriending or harassing the animals. For example, one condition of the Dolphin SMART program is that operators will not advertise, promote or offer swim-with-the-dolphin activities.

WDCS was recently awarded a grant from the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute under its 'Protect Wild Dolphins' program for the implementation of Dolphin SMART. WDCS and its partners are currently in the process of finalizing the Dolphin SMART program, with a tentative launch date this November implementation occurring through 2007.



Photo: DEP, L. Engleby/
Dolphin Ecology Project



Photo: C. Vail/WDCS



Photo: Charlie Phillips

Stay at least 50 yards away;

Move away slowly if you notice signs of disturbance;

Always allow dolphin groups to remain together;

Report Marine Mammal Protection Act violations;

Teach others to be Dolphin SMART.

SEE A SPOUT, WATCH OUT

By Regina Asmutis-Silvia, Senior Biologist

In summer, the whales swim close to shore to feed. They attract numerous small boats to these areas. As a result, substantial numbers of recreational boats frequent the feeding grounds of whales in the Northeast Region of the United States and in particular, Massachusetts coastal waters, increasing the risk of harassment and vessel collisions with whales. While much attention has been directed at ship-strike mitigation as a priority for large ships and

right whales, we believe that the potential impact of recreational vessels on large cetaceans, especially endangered

species, should not be ignored. As such, we developed "SEE A SPOUT, WATCH OUT" in 2001 as a cooperative outreach project of WDCS's Whale Adoption Project and the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

The program condensed the NE Regional whale watch guidelines into five easy to remember boating tips: 1. See a spout, watch out!; 2. Head on is wrong!; 3. Lots of boats, then talk to folks!; 4. Avoid troubles, steer clear of bubbles!; 5. Don't chase, give the whales space! This information was distributed through boater safety courses, rack cards at boating supply stores and placards posted at marinas, yacht clubs and fuel docks throughout Massachusetts.

In 2002, we received help organizing this program from a promising young college student, Karen Vale who joined us as an intern. Bright and enthusiastic, Karen helped increase the scope of the program from Massachusetts to areas throughout New England. She moved quickly through the field and in 2005 accepted a position with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Her responsibilities were many but one was near and dear to her- whale watching outreach. Through Karen, WDCS was able to add an invaluable new partner, NMFS, to the program. NMFS is the government body

directly charged with the protection of whales and dolphins and oversees the whale watching guidelines.

By way of this new partnership, we reached more than 150 divers, sailors, USCG Auxiliaries and Power Squadron representatives through presentations. We were also able to reach more than 2,000 other boaters through mailings.



Photo: WDCS

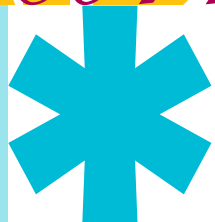
Karen has since moved on from NMFS and is now in graduate school. We wish her the best. Her care and commitment to science and conservation are equal to her personal commitment to the people around her. We know she'll continue on as an excellent researcher and conservationist. For us she is a reminder of the importance of volunteers to WDCS. We'd like to thank her and all of the volunteers who have spent countless hours helping us and whales over the years.



Photo: WDCS

If you'd like to learn more about safely boating around whales, a current and more complete list of whale watch guidelines can be obtained from the NOAA Fisheries Service web site: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/nr051999.pdf Or, check out "SEE A SPOUT, WATCH OUT" at our web site: whales.org/spout/index.htm

To learn more about volunteer opportunities with WDCS, please go to: whales.org/volunteerOpportunities.asp



WORD SCRAMBLE

After reading the articles, see if you can figure out what words are scrambled below. All of them can be found in this issue of your Whalewatch Newsletter. You can find the answers on the website in the adopters only section.

ELWFIDLI

NOHPLDI

TRASMHNAES

HELWA

PDLHOIN RMSTA

EGDEDRENAN

KMUBHCAP

ESE A UTPOS

ETLOOSBTNE

UTACYRSNA

GOBITOLIS

OLBLANO

RHKAS

EENCOAVSILA

LEGNASWLET KANB



THIS YEARS SIGHTINGS



AGASSIZ
BAT
BUCKSHOT
CHURCHILL
CLOUD
COLT
COLUMBIA
CORAL
CRYSTAL

CYGNUS
FILAMENT
HALFMOON
HAZE
ISTAR
IVORY
LIGHTNING
LINER
LITTLESPOT

MARS
MIDNIGHT
NILE
ONYX
ORBIT
PATCHES
PEPPER
REFLECTION
REGULUS

RUNE
SALT
SCRATCH
SCYLLA
SEAL
SICKLE
SIRIUS
SPOON
STUB

TANITH
WY

Visit the adopters only page at whales.org
To get more details about your whale. Your password can be found on the back page of your newsletters.

A DAY OF RESEARCH

By Daniela Gorgs

We've just started our boat-trip with Regina at the helm, our Whale Adoption Project biologist who's an expert in the marine mammal field, "a walking library", her team says. There's also her colleague, biologist Sue, and two WDCS office staff, Elaine and Lori, glad to be closer to the whales that they work for every day. We are heading to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, the whales' pantry, in anticipation of seeing these amazing creatures.

Elaine spotted him first. A basking shark, 20 feet (6m) long, entwined in seaweed on the right side of our boat, not even 6.5 feet (2m) away. "Awesome" – Elaine speaks out what we are all thinking. It's not even 7:30 – how much nicer could a morning be?

Regina has shifted the throttle back and the boat has stopped dead. The basking shark has disappeared long ago, no whale in sight. Why on earth has she stopped?



Photo: Daniela Gorgs

There's a small white balloon, bouncing on the water. With a long stick, Elaine grabs it and pulls it on board. Greetings from Dunkin' Donuts...But that's not the only trash collected on this day. Regina brakes for seven more balloons, two plastic bottles, a propane tank, a plastic bait bag, styrofoam – and,

eventually, the first humpback whale.

A black shining body surges in the water like a submarine. It looks as if he lifts and sinks himself in the rhythm of his breath. Silence. A little closer, we could stroke his head. Just a thought that flies away the next moment, as we meet with another humpback whale who dives under and stretches her fluke in the air.



Photo: Daniela Gorgs

"That's Columbia", Regina knows at a glance. Our captain can distinguish a whales' fluke by seeing it for only 10 seconds – she recognizes their unique markings in the same way I recognize the face of an old friend.

Regina calls to Sue, who is standing on top of the cabin taking photos. "Sue, what's that there behind us?" Regina points to something small in the distance. No time to answer. Next moment three humpbacks, their mouths wide open, jump out of the water several feet (1m) from our boat. This is more than awesome, this is incredibly impressive. Whales, the most amazing and biggest creatures in the world, are feeding right in front of our eyes. Gallons of



Photo: WDCS

water and kilos of fish streaming into their hungry jaws. What do I do? Concentrate on the camera-lens to capture the image? Or just immerse myself in the moment, lost in awe.

A strange feeling of solidarity with these huge animals comes over me. From this moment I know whales are not fish, not dumb creatures with cold eyes, but relatives in need of protection. I could get addicted to watching the 30-tons gracefully crop up out of the blue to dive into it again with an elegant tail slap. The atmosphere gets electric every time. How clumsy that seal seemed in contrast, the one who swam beside our boat half an hour later. It was also Elaine, who spotted him first.

Daniela Gorgs is an Assistant Editor for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany's largest newspaper. During her 8 month sabbatical, she has traveled to Scotland, England and America to research stories. Her interest in



whales has brought her to WDCS (NA) where she interned during September.

Our deepest appreciation for all her help and dedication during her stay. We will surely miss her.

Helping Whales



Raising money to help support the whales and dolphins is literally just a mouse click away. By logging onto www.goodsearch.com and typing Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society into the "I support" box, WDCS will then receive a donation each time you search the web. It's that easy. You can use GoodSearch like any other search engine. The site is powered by Yahoo and each time you use it, money is generated

for WDCS. Add GoodSearch to your bookmarks or make it your homepage for easier use. Also, spread the word to your family and friends to help generate more contributions. GoodSearch estimates each search will raise a penny for your designated charity. 100 supporters searching twice a day could generate \$730 a year and 10,000 supporters searching twice a day could generate \$73,000!

WDCS 2007 CALENDAR!

HELP SUPPORT OUR LIFE-SAVING WORK.

A portion of all calendar sales will go to WDCS work to protect whales, dolphins and their environment.

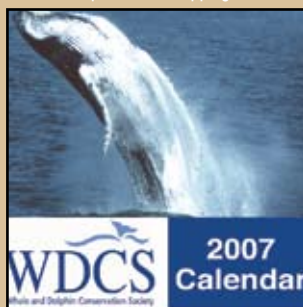
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*plus \$3.95 shipping & handling



Don't forget to visit your adopters only section at whales.org and enter "oceansalive" password.

WHALE TAIL VISA CARD!

Apply for a whale tail visa card and get your next adoption FREE! That's right FREE! Our partner, US Bank, is giving away a year's adoption with every approved credit card. The first time you use your credit card, US Bank will donate \$55.00 to WDCS and the Whale Adoption Project. In addition, each time you use your card, WDCS receives an additional \$.50 for each \$100.00 spent. Just imagine how this adds up when all our members use their cards and what a fantastic difference this makes to the whales and dolphins. Limit: one year adoption per new card holder. You must call within two months of receiving your new card. Simply call US Bank directly at 1-800-853-5576 ext. 8710



Whalewatch is published for Whale Adoption Project Members by WDCS (NA), Inc, the Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society. WDCS is the global voice for the protection of whales, dolphins and their environment.

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Editors:
Elaine Teixeira
Loralynn Teixeira
Emma Davis

Published by:
WDCS (NA), Inc.
70 East Falmouth Highway,
East Falmouth
MA 02536

Tel: (1)508.548.8328

TOLL FREE - 1.888.MYWHALE
(1.888.699.4253)

Fax: (1)508.457.1988

contact@wdcs.org