

WHALE TALES

VOL. 3 ISSUE 1

NEWS FROM WHALE TRUST



News
from
Meagan

Dear Friends,

With your help, Whale Trust has grown from a research organization with an annual budget of approximately \$25,000 a year to a small, yet dynamic organization with research and education programs that reach people worldwide with an annual budget of \$250,000. With this growth, we have remained committed to ensuring that 88-90% of all donations directly fund programs.

These last few years of growth have been an exciting time for us. They have allowed us to expand our own research and education programs, and helped encourage and support other non-profits, individuals and students working to increase our understanding of whales (see p. 2).

In 2005, Kapalua Land Company recruited Whale Trust to help create a local event supporting whale research. The event, named Whale Quest Kapalua, held its first event in 2006 and since then has raised over \$175,000 for local whale research, created unique educational programs for schoolchildren, brought local research organizations together, and increased our outreach to thousands of people in Hawaii each year (see p. 3).

We have also worked hard to increase our outreach to international audiences through our website, popular and scientific publications, books, and television documentaries. This year, we have two new books in the pipeline, as well as a television documentary that is being broadcast internationally through the National Geographic International Channel and nationally through Animal Planet (see p. 3).

Because of this growth and the exciting opportunities that continue to come our way, Whale Trust is facing an important and critical crossroads. To ensure the sustainability of our organization into the future, we need to diversify our funding base, increase support for programs, while staying true to our commitment of funneling 88% of our resources directly toward research and education. To become sustainable into the future, we have launched a fundraising campaign to double our annual budget over the next 2-3 years.

We hope you will take pride in our continued growth and success. And, we hope you will find a way to support our dreams of making the world a little better place to live - by not only increasing our scientific understanding of the world's largest mammals, but by helping to make the oceans come alive through photography, videography and educational opportunities for people of all ages.

Meagan Jones

Executive Director

Research Update

WHY DO MALE HUMPBACKS SING SONGS?

Jim Darling began studying humpback whale songs long before Whale Trust began. His work into this intriguing topic began in the early 1980s and has, over the years investigated the behavior and interactions of singers and examined different hypotheses to explain why whales sing.

Our most recent scientific publication on this ongoing work was a 50-page paper that laid out several questions for the next cycle of research, and proposed that the song may function as an 'index of

association' between individual males. *That is, the song may be a means for individual males to recognize how closely associated they are with other males, and may determine if specific males compete or cooperate around a female in estrous.*

This hypothesis requires testing to determine if correct, partially correct or entirely off the mark. The testing is occurring in three separate studies supported by Whale Trust. We are currently investigating: 1) whether song similarity is correlated with the geographical distance separating singers; 2) whether similarities or differences in the song determine whom singers interact with through playback experiments; and 3) different ways to measure cooperative versus competitive behavior of males when around females.

As you can imagine, observing and measuring the behavior of individual males

around a female is challenging. From a boat one is limited by when the whales are on the surface, and underwater glimpses are usually only momentary as the group moves quickly past the observer. In 2007, we conducted a pilot project to



A mother and newborn calf (center) are surrounded by three adult males presumably vying for the right to mate with her.

determine whether we could keep track of individuals over long stretches of time and measure the behavioral interactions between individuals while filming from a helicopter.

The promise was clear, but we were limited by the

quality of the camera and our ability to identify whales from 800-feet above!

In 2008, we arranged the use of the highest quality camera system available (the one used to film the aerial portion of *Planet Earth*). The results were spectacular, with nearly six hours of recordings of relationships, interactions and behavior in these situations (see www.whaletrust.org for a preview). This aerial perspective allows for the first time extended observations and measurement (using behavioral software programs) of male-male interactions around a female. "We are still in the earliest stages of analysis; however, it is clear the value of this technique and this perspective to behavior studies is enormous. Ultimately this technique may be as promising and revolutionary as underwater observations of whales were in the 1970s", Darling says.



A newborn calf (top) and an adult male escort (below) circle this stationary humpback mother.

**FEMALE HUMPBACKS:
WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?
(... and what's taking Meagan so long?)**

The goal of Meagan's Ph.D. work is to investigate the reproductive strategies of female humpbacks, one of the least known aspects of humpback whale behavior today. Fieldwork for this study took place over five seasons from 2003 -2007. Rather than spending 2008 on the water, Meagan has been re-living the entire five field seasons (199 days, and 835 groups), in front of a computer – whale by whale.

What takes so much time between data collection and publication? Often the analysis and writing stages take even longer than the fieldwork stage. This stage involves the researcher sitting in front of a computer sorting data, running statistical tests, developing the results of the study and placing them in a context of what we already know and then writing for publication. But it can also be the most rewarding stage as it is the time when the researcher is closest to the study and when revelations arise and new projects emerge.

Current analysis include development of an identification catalog (to track repeat sightings of females in different social groups), determination of the sex and size of subject whales through genetic analysis and photogrammetry techniques, analyzing 106 situations where the movement and behavioral interactions of male-female pairs were measured, and sorting data from 35 playback experiments where sounds of groups of males are played back to females in different reproductive stages. The results of this study available by the end of 2009.

HUMPBACK WHALES IN THE PHILIPPINES

For the past three years, Whale Trust has contributed to a new study led by Jo Marie Acabas, which focuses on describing a historically undocumented population of humpback whales in the Northern Philippines. In



Jo Marie Acabas

2008, the survey team covered transects around Camiguin and Fuga Islands, which resulted in a total of 98 cetacean sightings, including 73 humpback whale sightings. Interestingly, humpback whale songs were seldom heard, and only one humpback recording was made between March and

April. Twenty-two individual humpbacks were sighted during the month-long surveys, five of which were individuals photographed in previous years. Even more interesting, Jo Marie and colleagues involved in the SPLASH project discovered that one humpback whale photographed in the Philippines was also seen in Hawaii.

DO LARGER (OR OLDER) MALES SING DIFFERENT SONGS THAN YOUNGER MALES?

Elisa Girola from University of Trieste (Italy) used data collected by Whale Trust for her Master's thesis to investigate whether or not song composition varies with the size (and potentially age) of the singer. Whale Trust supplied the songs of small singers and large singers (size was determined from aerial photogrammetry work that occurred in recent years) and Elisa carried out the analysis over the last two years, just now completing her degree work.



Elisa Girola

Elisa found there were no significant differences between the songs of larger males and smaller males. Nonetheless, this is an important finding as it addresses one of the major explanations for the function of song, which suggests that the song provides information as to the fitness or dominance of the singer. The finding that the songs of small (younger) and large (older) singers are the same does not support the dominance hypothesis and suggests other explanations are more likely.

People Who Made a Difference in 2008

Renee Warr

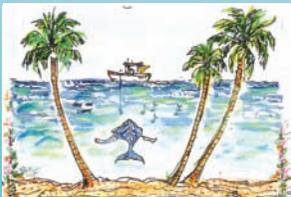
This year, we celebrate and honor Renee Warr for all of the hard work and time she has put into Whale Trust over the last four years. Although Renee no longer lives on Maui, she has spent 1-2 months for the last four winters volunteering her time and energy to Whale Trust. While on Maui, Renee spends much (if not all) of her time helping Meagan on projects ranging from administrative work to data collection, to leading school visits to helping organize Whale Quest. Anyone who knows Renee knows her energy is seemingly limitless and her enthusiasm contagious. She is an inspiration to all that meet her, and for this and much more, we celebrate Renee Warr as our volunteer of the year.

Volunteer of the year



Donor Spotlight - Susan Wallace Barnes

Sue Barnes is a cherished friend and colleague, who has been a supporter of Whale Trust from its inception (and even before). There are few people who care more for the oceans or ensuring that the next generation learns to appreciate the oceans than Sue. She has spent a lifetime illustrating her love of the ocean in a self-described 'whimsical' fashion. She donates a percentage of the profits of her artwork to Whale Trust, and is constantly campaigning others to become actively involved in our work. On top of that, she has spent the last year volunteering her time and artwork for Jim's upcoming book on humpback whales. For this and so much more, we recognize and thank our dear friend, Sue Barnes.



Special thanks to the following people who continue to make a difference

Mark and Jeri Robinson, Tad and Cindy Luckey, Doug and Kathy Gray, Barry and Irene McPhee for ensuring that our boats (and trailers) have safe homes in the harbor and on land. **Phylecia Platte** for donating and hosting the 2008 Whale Quest Kapalua final reception and thank you party. **Tracey Harrap** for spending the past two winters carving and painting life-sized whale tails!



Education Update

Whale Quest Raises More Than \$175,000 for Whale Research

Whale Quest Kapalua began three years ago as a collaboration between Whale Trust, Maui Land & Pineapple, and Kapalua Resort. Since its inaugural event in 2006, Whale Quest Kapalua has raised more than \$175,000 for local whale research efforts.

Last year, this free public event attracted more than 5,000 people during the weekend. In 2008, \$65,000 was raised through whale watching excursions, a charity golf tournament, direct donations, art sales by Randy Puckett, and the auction of a highly coveted trip to Antarctica donated by National Geographic Expeditions (this year we are auctioning a National Geographic trip to Baja to photograph the gray whales – see p. 4 for details).

Whale Trust in Schools

Each year, Whale Trust and Whale Quest Kapalua invite students from West Maui schools to participate in a special educational program designed for elementary and Jr. high students by Whale Trust Executive Director, Meagan Jones. The program includes a preparatory in-school visit led by Whale Trust staff and a subsequent field trip to the annual Whale Quest Kapalua event.

Over 160 students from seven different elementary and Jr. high classrooms kicked off this year's Whale Quest event. For nearly four hours, students were engaged in a series of activities related to whales, photography, filmmaking, and ocean conservation. Highlights included kids balancing on a surfboard while trying to place a suction-cup tag on a make believe whale, making whale sounds with balloons, painting life-sized whale tails, learning firsthand about National Geographic's crittercam from inventor, Greg Marshall, and trying to disentangle a whale with Ed Lyman from the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary.



Whale Trust Visits First-Grade Classroom in Dallas, Texas



On a recent trip to Dallas, Harrison Kashata, a first grader and avid whale enthusiast from Hyer Elementary School in Dallas, invited Meagan Jones, Whale Trust Executive Director, to visit his classroom. Harrison has been following whales and Whale Trust since before he could read and knew practically every answer to Meagan's questions! After a brief introduction to whales, the first grade students helped Meagan to find humpback whales sighted in both Hawaii and Alaska using natural markings on the whale's tails. The Dallas classroom is now busy naming each of the whales they identified for Whale Trust.

Announcing Whale Quest 2009

February 13-15th, 2009 at the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua

From February 13-15th, the fourth annual Whale Quest Kapalua will be held at the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua, on Maui. We encourage anyone with an interest in whales, conservation, underwater photography and/or an interest in golfing the spectacular Kapalua Plantation Course - while supporting a great cause - to join us.

2009 presenters include researcher(s), Bruce Mate, a pioneer in satellite telemetry with large whales, Jon Stern from the International Whaling Commission and Chris Gabriele from Glacier Bay National Park. Photographers and filmmakers include, Patricio Robles Gill from the International League of Conservation Photographers, Bryan Skerry, a photographer with *National Geographic Magazine*, Hugh Pearson from the BBC, and Adam Ravetch, the cinematographer for the film, *An Arctic Tale*. For a full list of presenters, a schedule of events or to sign up for the golf tournament, see www.whaletrust.org

Whale Photos Donated to Local Schools

Two 40 x 60 humpback whale photographs taken and signed by National Geographic photographer and Whale Trust co-founder, Flip Nicklin, were donated to local West Maui schools this winter. The signed original photographs were given away as part of our ongoing outreach program to Maui's schools and as part of Whale Quest Kapalua. Flip Nicklin and Meagan Jones were on hand to present the photographs to the Principal and Vice Principal of these lucky schools, while students oohed and ahed from across the campus.



Whale Trust in the News

Award-Winning Documentary Featuring Whale Trust

For the last several years, Whale Trust



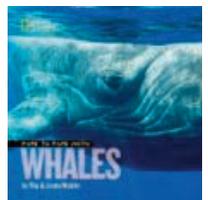
partnered with filmmaker, Daniel Opitz, to make the television documentary, *The Humpback Code*. The film has won numerous

awards including Best Ocean Film at the International Wildlife Film Festival and Gold in the Nature Wildlife Category at the World Media Festival. *Decoding Humpbacks*, the US version of the film, can now be seen on the prestigious *Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom* series on *Animal Planet*, and worldwide on the *National Geographic International Channel*. Check your local listings.

"Face to Face with Whales"

by Flip and Linda Nicklin, published by National Geographic

Recommended Age: 7-9 years



Whale Trust Releases New Book on Humpback Whales in 2009

DID YOU EVER WONDER WHY HUMPBACK WHALES BREACH, SING OR MIGRATE THOUSANDS OF MILES EACH WINTER?

If so, you can't miss Jim Darling's latest book that tackles exactly what researchers



have learned about Hawaii's humpback whales through decades of research. After nearly five years of work, the book is headed towards publication and will be available in 2009. All profits from sales of

this book will benefit Whale Trust's research programs. *Written by Jim Darling, photographs by Flip Nicklin, illustrations by Sue Barnes.*

LOOKING FOR AN UNUSUAL CHRISTMAS
PRESENT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?
GIVE A TRIP OF A LIFETIME AND SUPPORT WHALE TRUST

Photograph Gray Whales with Flip Nicklin

Baja Peninsula March 28–April 14, 2009

National Geographic Expeditions has donated a cabin for two people aboard the National Geographic Sea Bird from March 28-April 14, 2009. The trip is valued at \$7,200 p/person (including complementary one-way airfare from Los Angeles to La Paz). The Sea Bird feels like a large private yacht, and comfortably accommodates 62 guests in 31 outside cabins (see website for more details).



You can win this trip by submitting your bid to Whale Trust no later than December 15th, 2008.

The highest bid received on or by December 15th will receive a cabin for two onboard this luxury expedition to Baja. Winning bids over the value of the trip receive a tax-deductible donation from Whale Trust. Minimum bid: \$8,000.

All profits benefit Whale Quest Kapalua.

How you can help Whale Trust

- Make a cash donation or to get frequency flyer miles for your donation, use Paypal at www.whaletrust.org
- Recruit five friends to join the Whale Trust team (gifts of over \$1,000 receive a personalized and complementary gift)
- Host a fundraising reception with Flip, Jim, or Meagan in your city
- Give Whale Trust books as presents to your friends (pre-order signed copies)
- Purchase any Randy Puckett sculpture and 25% of the sale will go to Whale Trust (if donor directed) – visit randypuckett.com for more information
- Donate Stock Options to Whale Trust
- Bid on the Silent Auction Trip to Baja with National Geographic Society (value \$14,400); all proceeds benefit Whale Quest Kapalua
- Sign-up for the Charity Golf Tournament at Whale Quest Kapalua (www.whaletrust.org for a sign-up sheet); \$270 is tax-deductible.



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