

WHALE TALES

VOL. 5 ISSUE 1

NEWS FROM WHALE TRUST



News from the President . . .

Dear Friends of Whale Trust,

2011 will mark the tenth anniversary of Whale Trust! Looking back on our accomplishments, a sense of pride develops as one reflects on what Meagan, Jim and Flip have achieved. It's also important to say thanks to each of you for supporting their work. Because of your continued support, Whale Trust has completed projects that earned international recognition for its research and education efforts. During the last 10 years, this organization has grown from a small research driven organization with an extremely modest budget to an organization that has conducted and supported research projects from Hawaii to the Philippines and served as a leader in creating educational opportunities for schoolchildren and adults through events, outreach programs, scientific and popular publications (including books for children and adults), and television documentaries. Feel proud that your contributions have been a catalyst to make such a difference. The world is a better place for it.

In this past year, we have seen Whale Trust reach more milestones, many of which are featured in this newsletter or on our website. We especially congratulate Meagan for completing her Ph.D. and receiving a leadership grant from the prestigious Switzer Foundation, where she has been a Fellow since 2003, to return to Whale Trust as Executive Director. Dr. Karyn Cochran deserves all of our appreciation for the terrific work she did as Interim Executive Director. It was a personal sacrifice for Karyn, but she accomplished the role enthusiastically and was instrumental in Whale Trust's 2010 accomplishments. Chiefly, we utilized her skills to diversify fundraising to include private and government grants into our foundation – a critical component to ensuring the sustainability of this dynamic organization.

In the next year, the long-term direction of Whale Trust will be decided. Meagan will be working closely with the board to develop a strategic plan. The vision and plans being developed far exceed anything we have accomplished so far.

Indeed, Whale Trust is at a crossroads. There is compelling evidence that our oceans are facing a crisis situation. Will we become financially sustainable and realize the dream of creating and inspiring change in how we view and interact with our oceans and the animals in it? Ultimately, you will help decide these issues as it's your support that will shape the future of this organization. We hope you will choose to continue to invest in us. Our success depends upon it.

Sincerely,

Allen N. Jones

Research Update

WHY THE RESEARCH WE DO MATTERS

We are often asked to articulate why our research is important, why people should care, and why they should support research into the lives of whales. With so many issues in the world today, and the tightening of the economy, deciding how to best make a meaningful impact is truly challenging. We, too, like to support other causes. But whales and the oceans are our passion. Whales have become our link with the natural world, the way we have chosen to learn about the world around us, most specifically about the vitality and health of our oceans and how we can help sustain it. This past year, we were reminded of why our work into the social lives of these animals is critical for the success of recovery and management efforts. We wanted to share it with you - in hopes that you might also be reminded of why your support of our research is vital.

In 1994, gray whales were deemed a success

story. The Eastern Pacific population of gray whales was believed to have recovered to pre-whaling numbers (approximately 20,000) and were taken off the U.S. endangered species list. Soon thereafter, the Makah band on Olympic Peninsula was granted permission to hunt gray whales in this region by the U.S. government, with International Whaling Commission (IWC) approval. With government funding, the Makah hunted one gray whale in 1999. Since then, litigations challenging the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Makah management of the hunt have ensued.

The management controversy arose because of a small population of about 200 gray whales that do not make the full migration to northern seas in summer (Bering and Chukchi Seas), but instead feed along the Pacific coast from northern

California to southeast Alaska – including the whaling grounds of the Makah. This population is comprised of many of the same individuals each year, with some whales returning each summer for over 30 years. While 99% of the gray whales briefly pass through these whaling grounds each year, only 1% actually lives there. Initially, management decisions about how many whales could be taken each year were incorrectly based on the overall population of 20,000 – not the 200 whales that return each summer to feed.

This past June, Whale Trust provided a small grant to help co-founder, Dr. Jim Darling, travel to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in Agadir, Morocco to present new and important genetic findings on

the social structure of gray whales. This was a collaborative project between Jim and Dr. Tim Frasier, a geneticist from St. Mary's University in Nova Scotia, Canada. Their research revealed that these 200 gray whales summering off the



Gray whales off the coast of Vancouver Island

Pacific Northwest and Vancouver Island are genetically distinct from the majority of the herd that migrates to the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

The study by Darling and Frasier was based on a comparison of DNA samples collected from 40 whales in the Pacific Northwest population with DNA samples collected from gray whales on the Mexican breeding grounds where the entire population aggregates in winter. The results clearly indicated that the "local" gray whales, the summer residents (that feed in the Pacific Northwest) have a separate genetic identity from the rest of the eastern Pacific herd (that spends the summer on feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi Seas).

The most likely explanation of this genetic distinction is that mothers bring their calves to these feeding grounds, and this begins a pattern

of related individuals returning each year to this same section of coast. These findings fit well with other long-term studies that have shown individual whales returning for decades each summer to the same region, including many calves first identified with their mothers that are then seen alone in subsequent summers. This is not an unusual pattern for larger baleen whales. Matrilineal directed fidelity to feeding grounds has also been described for humpback whales and right whales.

This discovery means that the local whales (southern feeding group) do not represent a random subset, nor can be replaced by, individuals from the overall population and therefore should be treated as a separate unit for management purposes. In practice, this means that any examination of potential whaling impacts on this population starts with a pool of 200 whales (the population estimate of the southern feeding group) rather than the approximately 20,000 whales in the overall eastern Pacific population.

The most immediate implication of this study is that the current management scheme, based on the idea that the entire eastern Pacific herd of gray whales is just one stock or management unit, needs review. The current management policy (of the US National Marine Fisheries Service) has presumed the southern feeding group is simply an aggregation of individuals with no social structure, which mix randomly with rest of herd, and are replaceable with any whales in the remainder of the herd. After Jim and Tim presented their research to the IWC Scientific Committee, which includes Makah and NMFS representatives, it was agreed that this genetic distinction of the southern whales was a 'plausible hypothesis' that required further investigation.

This conclusion has already had some impact. It has temporarily stopped the progress of the court ordered environmental impact statement necessary for a continuation of the hunt until this issue is resolved, and has led to the initiation of a major, range-wide study (from Russia to California) of gray whale genetics, essentially replicating and expanding the Darling and Frasier study. The replication of Jim and Tim's study is both appropriate and worthwhile, and is currently underway, with results expected by the next IWC meeting in May 2011.

There are lessons to be learned from this story. First, knowledge of whale biology – and especially their behavior and social structure (the key research of Whale Trust), is vital to successful management and conservation of whale populations. Without it, proceeding with management plans is just a shot in the dark. The second lesson is the importance of conducting independent field research, and the willingness and importance of sharing that data with larger government agencies such as NMFS.

The third lesson is to apply what is currently being learned with gray whales to fu-

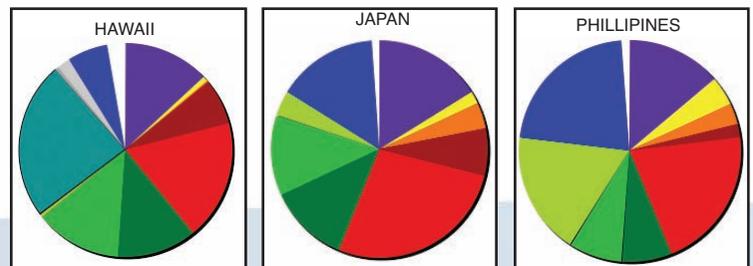
ture management efforts with humpbacks. Humpback whale populations have also recovered, and they, just like gray whales will undoubtedly lose their endangered status in the not so distant future. Hopefully, we will learn from the lessons of this gray whale experience; that is, the importance of science preceding management decisions, not following them. For humpbacks, there is still much to learn if we are to know beforehand the real impacts of human decisions on these animals.



A humpback whale begins his descent into a singing position

SONG COMPARISONS BETWEEN HAWAII, JAPAN, AND THE PHILIPPINES ARE UNDERWAY

Part of Jim Darling's song research, in collaboration with colleagues Jo Maria Acabes in the Philippines and Manami Yamachuchi in Japan, involves a comparison of songs between Hawaii and these two Far East regions. Analysis is ongoing, but these pie charts show the 2006 song from each region. The songs were all recorded at approximately the same time in each location. Each color designates a specific theme. It is easy to see that the songs are remarkably similar even though singers are 1000s of miles apart. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether singers closer together have a more similar song than those that are more distant.



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT WHALE TRUST TODAY

• **MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION** cash, credit card or Paypal - see www.whaletrust.org - or call us at 808-572-5700



• **PLAY GOLF** in the Whale Trust Annual Golf Tournament on January 29, 2011 and receive a tax-donation today. To register, call 572-5700.

• **BUY WHALE TRUST BOOKS** for friends and family – great gifts!
Hawaii's Humpbacks: Unveiling the Mysteries and Among Giants: A Life with Whales

JOIN WHALE TRUST RESEARCHERS at Whale Tales on February 12, 2011 and at Flatbread Pizza on March xx, 2011

• **RECRUIT FRIENDS TO SUPPORT WHALE TRUST**

• **HOST A WHALE TRUST FUNDRAISER**

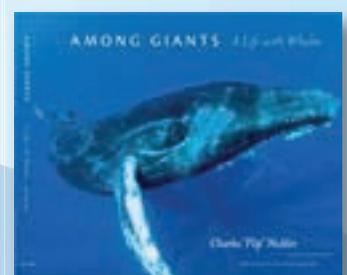
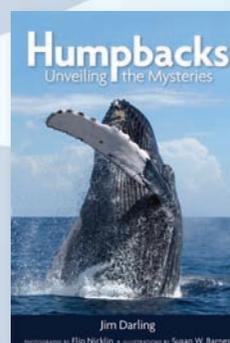
• **VOLUNTEER**

WHALE TRUST BOOKS

When you purchase these books from Whale Trust, a portion (*) or all (**) of the profits support Whale Trust research and education programs.

IN BOOKSTORES APRIL 2011

Meet the Authors at Whale Tales, February 12, 2011



Community Outreach

WHALE TALES – A NEW EVENT COMING TO MAUI

February 12, 2011, 10am – 5pm

Whale Trust is proud to co-host *Whale Tales* – a new, day-long event designed to bring together marine researchers, photographers and conservationists with the general public.

Keynote speakers include famed underwater photographer and cinematographer, Chuck Nicklin, and Richard Ellis, one of America's leading marine conservationists. Flip Nicklin, a co-founder of Whale Trust and photographer for *National Geographic Magazine*, will be launching his new book, *Among Giants: A Life with Whales* and will speak about his life's work following whales and researchers around the globe. In addition, local whale researchers including Jim Darling, Meagan Jones, Mark Ferrari, Ed Lyman, and Dan Salden will be present to share their latest findings into the lives of humpback whales around Maui.

What's more, Jean Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment program will be leading complimentary children's educational activities highlighting humpback whales.

This year's event is sponsored by Makana Aloha Foundation and will be held at The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua on Saturday, February 12, 2011 from 10 am – 5 pm. For updates and more information, please visit www.whaletrust.org.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2010

November 14 – 18

Jim Darling will be signing copies of his recently published book, *Hawaii's Humpback: Unveiling the Mysteries*, at the 11th American Cetacean Society International Conference held in Monterey, California.

DECEMBER 2010

December 11 – 12

Whale Trust Strategic Planning Retreat, Maui, Hawaii.

JANUARY 2010

January 29

Annual Whale Trust Charity Golf Tournament, King Kamehemaha Golf Club, Maui.

FEBRUARY 2011

February 12, 10 am – 5 pm

Whale Tales, Ritz-Carlton Maui

Whale Trust's three co-founders, Flip Nicklin, Jim Darling and Meagan Jones will each be presenting results from their latest work.

Book launch for *Among Giants: A Life with Whales* by Charles "Flip" Nicklin.
Book signing with the author:

February 15

Flip Nicklin presents at The Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary in Kihei, Maui at 6:00 pm.

MARCH 2011

March 12 – 13

Ocean Arts Festival, Campbell Park, Lahaina, Maui.

March 12 – 19

Join Flip Nicklin on a National Geographic Expedition to Baja

Benefit Night for Whale Trust at Flatbread Pizza, Paia, Maui. *Date TBD.*

Check www.whaletrust.org in the spring for more dates and events near you.

Flip will be traveling for the next two years with his new book and has a full calendar of events, book signings and gallery openings lined up around the country.

Whale Trust in the News

Meagan Jones Awarded Switzer Leadership Grant in 2010



Meagan Jones, co-founder of Whale Trust, received a 2010-2011 leadership grant from The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation to serve as full-time Executive Director for Whale Trust. During 2011, Meagan will work closely with the board to develop a 3-year strategic and fundraising plan for Whale Trust, while exploring collaborative partnerships within the community to help meet the organization's larger vision and goals.

The Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation is a non-profit organization that identifies and nurtures environmental leaders who have the ability and determination to make a significant impact, and supports initiatives that will have direct and measurable results to improve environmental quality. The Foundation accomplishes this by awarding academic fellowships and project grants, sponsoring professional development activities, and fostering a growing network of Switzer Fellows, environmental practitioners, and organizations. In 2002, Meagan was awarded the prestigious Switzer academic fellowship for her doctoral work in environmental studies, and upon degree completion became eligible for the leadership award.

Flip Nicklin named Outstanding Photographer of the Year for 2012

The North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) is bestowing one of its highest honors to Flip Nicklin, a National Geographic contributing photographer and co-founder of Whale Trust. Best known for capturing the world's best images of whales and other underwater life. The award will be presented at the 2012 Nature Photography Summit presented by NANPA, to be held February 29-March 3, 2012, in Jacksonville, Florida. Flip will be one of the headlining keynote speakers at the event.



NANPA's Outstanding Photography of the Year award goes to an individual who has demonstrated unquestioned skill as a nature photographer. Although length of career may be a factor, more important are the individual's accomplishments and body of photographic work. By receiving this honor, Flip joins the elite ranks of other NANPA Outstanding Photographers of the Year, including Jack Dykinga, Joel Sartore, Tim Laman, James Balog, Kevin Schafer, Patricio Robles Gil, Tui De Roy, Norbert Wu, Gary Braasch, Michael Nichols, Robert Glenn Ketchum, Tom Mangelsen, Frans Lanting, Art Wolfe and John Shaw.

People Who Made A Difference In 2010

Makana Aloha Foundation



One of the many gifts we received from co-hosting Whale Quest Kapalua was our introduction to Gunars

and JoRene Valkirs, and their daughter, Jami Burks. Since our first meeting several years ago, their family foundation, Makana Aloha Foundation, has been instrumental in supporting the goals, dreams and vision of Whale Trust. Literally, they have contributed to every facet of Whale Trust, from our education and outreach efforts to helping advance our research goals to expanding and broadening our fundraising and community efforts. Whale Trust is extremely grateful for both their friendship, ongoing support, and commitment to Maui.



Phylecia Platte

This year, we celebrate and honor Phylecia Platte for her dedication, enthusiasm and support of Whale Trust and Whale Quest Kapalua. With the cancellation of Whale Quest in 2010, Phylecia brought researchers and Whale Quest supporters together for a sunset whale watch to help promote and plan a replacement event for 2011. Partly because of her efforts, we are now planning a one-day event, Whale Tales, which will be held at the Ritz-Carlton in February 2011 (a date will be announced on our website in mid-November). Thank you, Phylecia!



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. Thank you to **Patty Hackney** for her ongoing support of Whale Trust, even from her new home in Seattle. **Susan Wallace Barnes** for her ongoing support and tireless efforts in promoting and selling *Hawaii's Humpbacks*.

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*A portion or all of the donation was made to Whale Quest Kapalua.