News from Whale Trust

WHALE TALES

VOL. I ISSUE I

News from Meagan

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first issue of Whale Tales, our brand-new newsletter designed to keep you - our valuable donors and volunteers updated with all the exciting news happening around Whale Trust.

2006 has been a fantastic year! We have seen explosive growth in our community and educational outreach efforts and leapt forward in our ongoing research into humpback behavior and communication (see research update). Some highlights of our year are featured within this newsletter.

2007 is looking at least as exciting as 2006. Kicking off the year in January will be the humpback article in *National Geographic* Magazine that Flip has been working on with natural history writer, Doug Chadwick, for the last three years, featuring the research of Whale Trust. Documentary filmmaker, Daniel Opitz, will be back for a second season working with Whale Trust on his television and film documentary, *Whales in Mind*. February 16-18th, the 2nd annual Whale Quest Kapalua will be held, and on March 15th, Flip will host his annual research night in Campbell Park. Expect to see changes to our website by the holidays, and, of course, if you are in Maui this winter, please let us know – our annual Hawaii field season runs from January 1st – April 15th.

Three years ago, many of you made a multi-year commitment to support Whale Trust. It is very exciting that several of you have not only renewed your support for three more years, but also committed at an even higher level. These multi-year commitments by you, our supporters, make a tremendous difference in our planning, and we thank you. As usual, we continue to have great support from volunteers. To everyone who comes out to take notes, shoot IDs, help on the water, in the office or lab, or offer moral or logistical support, thank you. We couldn't do it without you!

Until next time, our best wishes for a peaceful and happy holiday season.

Meagan Jones
Executive Director

WHALE QUEST 2006

With nearly a thousand people in attendance and over $33,000 raised for whale research in Hawaii, the first annual Whale Quest Kapalua symposium held February 12-14th, 2006 at the Ritz-Carlton was a success. "Our first year hosting Whale Quest Kapalua at The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua was a great success for young and old alike," said Nancy Cross, vice president of events management at Kapalua Resort.

So much so that we are going to do it again! The second annual Whale Quest Kapalua will be held again this year from February 16-18th, 2007 at the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua. While Kapalua Land Company hosts the annual symposium, Whale Trust develops and coordinates the educational program, which includes the presenters, school outreach programs, exhibitors, and workshops that are offered free of charge to the public.

This year, Chris Johns, Editor in Chief of National Geographic Magazine, Dr. Randall Wells, Director Sarasota Dolphin Research Program, Dr. Jonathan Stern, San Francisco State University, Dr. Stephen Gittings, Senior Science Director for the National Marine Sanctuaries Program, and underwater cinematographer, Koji Nakamura will join local researchers, Dr. Jim Darling, Dr. Dan Salden, Dr. Adam Pack, Mark Ferrari, David Matilla and award-winning photographer, Flip Nicklin and natural history writer Doug Chadwick for a program that brings scientists, artists, natural history writers, filmmakers, and conservationists together on Maui.

The event kicks off on Friday morning with approximately 200 elementary and jr. high students visiting Whale Quest Kapalua to meet with presenters and engage in a series of age-appropriate activities that take them behind the scenes at National Geographic Magazine and into the world of whales through a variety of art and science projects. Highlights from last year's program included students choosing a cover for the June issue of National Geographic Magazine and painting individual markings and patterns on life-size replicas of humpback whale tails.

As last year, the event will include a fundraising golf tournament, VIP receptions, and benefit whalewatches led by Whale Quest Kapalua presenters. For more information about how you can become involved in Whale Quest Kapalua, contact Meagan Jones or visit our website at: www. whaletrust.org.

Research Update

by Jim Darling, Ph.D.

The Whale Trust research program to date has focused on behavior, social organization and communication of humpback whales. These are areas of study that, on one hand are typically the most difficult to find funding from traditional institutions due to the long time frames and exploratory nature, and on the other hand are the most fascinating, the most likely to provide critical insight into the nature of the animals and their environment, and whose understanding is vital to meaningful conservation and management programs.

Our study of humpbacks on the Hawaiian breeding grounds had its beginnings in the late 1970s, where Jim Darling and Flip Nicklin began some of the first studies on living humpback whales. Questions that arose at that time regarding the function of the humpback whale song were still unresolved in the 1990s, and led to their return to Hawaii in 1996 and the current research program, now in its 10th full season. In 2002, the research program was expanded significantly with the complementary investigation and Ph.D. project of Meagan Jones to describe humpback female behavior patterns on the breeding ground. Both studies are currently very active.

The study of humpback song has made significant strides over the years from the first basic questions of who sings (the males), to who joins singers (males), to looking at different aspects of the context of the song and broader male behavior patterns, and hypothesizing song function. The current (2006) working hypothesis is that the song organizes males during the breeding season, possibly through it providing a measure of association of different males, and this organization may account for the range of male relations around a female ranging from cooperative to competitive. This idea will be tested over the next few seasons, with detailed investigation of male-male relationships, analysis of song similarity versus degree of singer separation, and playback experiments where specific types of song are played to singers and their reactions measured.

The younger study of female behavior and reproductive strategy delves into one of the least known, yet one of the most important, aspects of humpback whale behavior. This study focuses on the impact reproductive status might have on female behavior patterns, including association patterns and specific interactions with males during the breeding season. There is little doubt females come to Hawaii for the purpose of mating, and theory would suggest they, in some way, "choose" the fittest male available. This study will provide insight into how they may achieve this objective, clearly critical to their reproductive success. The first stage of this study, Meagan's Ph.D work, involves one further field season (2007) before final analysis and reporting.

Whale Trust is also assisting with two related studies on humpback whales. The first is the description of a newly discovered population of humpback whales in the northern Philippine islands conducted by Jo Marie Acabes of the Philippines. Funds granted to this study allowed, among other things, recording of songs for comparison to those of Japan and Hawaii as part of the song study described above. Second, Elisa Girola, a student of the University of Trieste in Italy is using songs and data collected during our studies in Hawaii to determine if there is a connection between the song characteristics and the size (age) of the singer.

The ultimate objective of all this work is a definitive description of humpback whale behavior on the breeding grounds, and real insight into the mating systems and social organization of this species and whales in general. The results of these studies have been, and will continue to be, presented in scientific journals and conferences as well as in popular media. This past year, results of our research were presented at scientific and popular conferences, published in scientific journals, and in the coming year, will be featured in the upcoming National Geographic Magazine, and are a large part of an ongoing documentary filmed by Daniel Opitz on humpback whales in Hawaii.

Whale Trust in Print

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

To learn more about the work of Whale Trust, don't miss the January Issue of *National Geographic* Magazine.

Humpback Whales: What are they doing down there?

January 2007

Photographs by Flip Nicklin
Text by Douglas Chadwick

Humpback Whale Songs: Do they organize males during the breeding season?

This fall, the latest results of our research into the social function of humpback whale songs were published in the scientific journal, *Behaviour*. The 50-page article summarizes the last several years of our research and proposes a new hypothesis for why male humpback whales sing.

A PDF copy of this paper is available on our web site at www.whaletrust.org/new_sub/new_pub.htm

Coming Soon . . .

Face to Face with Dolphins

by Flip and Linda Nicklin

Face to Face with Whales

by Flip and Linda Nicklin

Humpback Whales: Behavior on the Hawaiian Breeding Grounds

by Jim Darling with photographs by Flip Nicklin and artwork by Susan Barnes

Educational Outreach Programs

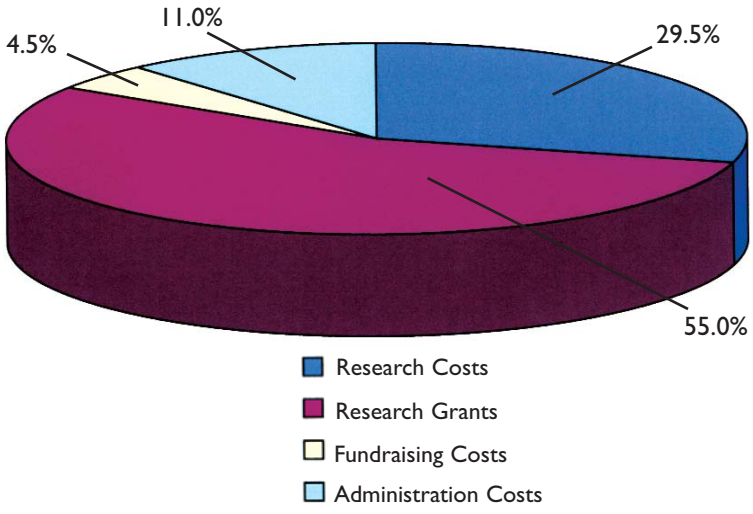
During Whale Quest in 2006, 150 elementary and jr. high students and 25 Maui Community College students participated in a special outreach program for Maui's schools designed by Whale Trust. The younger students spent approximately three hours rotating through a series of fun science and art activities, while the older students participated in a symposium focusing on careers in marine arts and sciences. Highlights included students choosing a cover for National Geographic Magazine, painting individual markings on life-sized replicas of whale tails, and mimicking humpback whale sounds into a mic and computer analysis program used by researchers to study humpback whale songs.

In March, over 200 people showed up for the annual research night in Campbell Park hosted by Flip Nicklin and organized by the Lahaina Town Action Committee. Six researchers from four different organizations shared the results of their latest work with whales off the coast of Maui.

Photography and Videography Update

In 2006, Flip and Jason added HDTV to our ongoing video and behavioral catalogue of humpback whale behavior. In June, Jason's groundbreaking videography and use of HDTV in our research was featured in an article in the Science Times section of the New York Times. The film will also be featured in an upcoming hi-definition television documentary directed by Daniel Opitz, which features the team and work of Whale Trust.

WHALE TRUST 2006 ANNUAL EXPENSES



Upcoming Events (Winter 2007)

February 16-18, 2007

Whale Quest Kapalua
Ritz-Carlton Resort, Kapalua, Hawaii

March 15, 2007

Research Night in Campbell Park
Lahaina, HI

Visit www.whaletrust.org/ /new_sub/lect.htm
for a full list of recent and upcoming public events.

ABOUT WHALE TRUST

The mission of Whale Trust is to promote, support, and conduct scientific research on whales and the marine environment, and develop public education programs based directly on results of scientific research.

Whale Trust is committed to promoting and fostering Maui as a unique living laboratory for whale research and the marine environment.

Thank you for helping us to achieve our vision.

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