

Listen... You'll See a Whale

by Bernardo Alps



and, most importantly, it surfaced again within earshot. We had many great looks, and after little more than a half hour the fog started to drift away and we found ourselves watching several blue whales in nice and sunny conditions.

How do you find whales in dense fog? Seriously, what do you do if you have a boat full of eager whale watchers anxious to see blue whales but you have less than a football field of visibility? Less than the width of a football field?

It turned out to be one of those days when you can't be sure how many whales are out there because you

The answer is: you listen for them. That is what we did on the ACS Whales of Summer trip aboard the "Condor Express" on 26 July. Captain Mat Curto had a pretty good idea of where the blue whales had been feeding for several days, and he cruised slowly through the pea soup. It wasn't long until he shouted "there's a whale" and turned the boat. He kept listening and turning, and pretty soon we could make out the shape of a blue whale through the fog. It turned out to be a very cooperative whale. It came pretty close to the boat, it showed its flukes on the deep dive,



have whales in every direction, near and far. Captain Mat submitted ten blue whales in his report for that day, but we likely saw twice that many.



Photos © Bernardo Alps

Spyhopper

ACS Newsletter
October 2008

Listen...whales, cont.



There were many close approaches and on several occasions the whales threw up their massive flukes. Conditions were flat calm throughout the day, making it easy to see the turquoise glow of the blue whales underwater.



For many passengers the highlight of the day had come earlier in the form of a minke whale that put on an unusual show for us. We found this rather small whale, barely 15 feet long, an hour and a half into the trip. It was well seen during repeated close surfacing in calm waters and then starting chasing a California sea lion just under the surface while swimming upside down only 40 feet in front of the boat. It showed amazing agility with some very tight turns. Finally, it came halfway out of the water on its side, showing its white-banded pectoral fin and then its flukes in a big splash. We also saw a second, larger minke whale in the same area.

We also got to witness the work of a research team on the water. The research vessel "Pacific Storm" from Oregon State University and its inflatable

"Hurricane" were tagging blue whales in the area for research by Dr. Bruce Mate. We got to see the gun used to fire satellite-monitored radio tags up close when the "Hurricane" came alongside to pick up a crew member that had hitched a ride with us. We also saw a couple of whales with the small tags sticking out of their backs, and we obtained ID photos of several whales to be shared with Cascadia Research for their blue whale catalog.



The sightings for the day were rounded out by multiple encounters with pods of long-beaked common dolphins on the way out to islands, on the way back and while we were busy with blue whales. Some were feeding, many rode the bow of our vessel and there were many small calves.

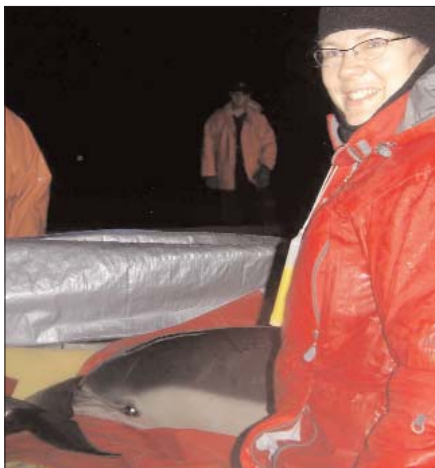
ACS thanks the "Condor Express" and its crew for another great day in the Santa Barbara Channel, full with amazing wildlife encounters.



Photos © Bernardo Alps

For information about upcoming trips sponsored by ACS, visit acsonline.org.

Revitalizing ACS



ACS President Kathy Zagzebski assists with a stranded common dolphin. Photo © Cape Cod Stranding Network, a project of IFAW.

Dear ACS Members,

Greetings! It is my pleasure to update you on some exciting developments happening at ACS.

2008 marks ACS's 41st year as the oldest whale conservation group in the world. This year we also celebrate

an initiative to revitalize ACS. The national board of directors is evaluating infrastructure and defining the organization's strategic priorities in order to best carry out our mission of protecting dolphins, porpoises, and whales and their habitats.

A major cornerstone of ACS's revitalization is a generous three-year Challenge Grant from the Pacific Life Foundation to assist ACS in building our organizational capacity. Many thanks to Bob Haskell, President of Pacific Life Foundation, for this opportunity. This year's Annual Fund appeal will focus on building our capacity and extending our influence to help cetaceans, and I will ask all ACS members to make a gift to help match this challenge grant. Please be on the lookout for your letter later this fall!

I hope you found the "Strandings" edition of *Whalewatcher* sent out earlier this year informative. Through stranding response, we can humanely care for individual animals and also collect scientific data important to understanding population health and the ocean ecosystem. We enjoyed giving you a glimpse into this exciting field. If you have not yet received your copy of this issue, please contact Kaye at the Headquarters office. Plans are in full swing for our next *Whalewatcher* due out in 2009. And I hope you enjoy catching up on ACS news with this copy of *Spyhopper*.

Registrations are pouring in for ACS's 11th International Conference, "Whales in a Changing World," November 13-16 in Monterey, CA. Conference speakers include cetacean and marine mammal scientists working in all corners of the world exploring how these fascinating animals are coping with various environmental and anthropogenic challenges. If you have not yet signed up, please hurry - you don't want to miss this conference! You'll find information in this newsletter and online at www.acsonline.org.

Thank you for caring about whales, dolphins and porpoises and the oceans in which they live. And thank you for your continued support of ACS's mission. On behalf of dolphins, porpoises, and whales everywhere,

*Kathy Zagzebski
ACS President*



Thank You, June!

In her lifetime, the animals of the ocean and land held a special place in the heart of June Chaplin. The American Cetacean Society received an unexpected gift from June this year - a bequest to ACS was included in her will to support

ACS's mission of protecting whales, dolphins, porpoises and their habitats.

June's bequest was a wonderful surprise, and we regret never having the opportunity to thank her in person for the gift she had planned. So we honor her now and thank her for her concern and generosity.

If you have planned a bequest to ACS, we hope you will tell us about it so that we can express our gratitude. Please contact Kaye Reznick at 310-548-6279.

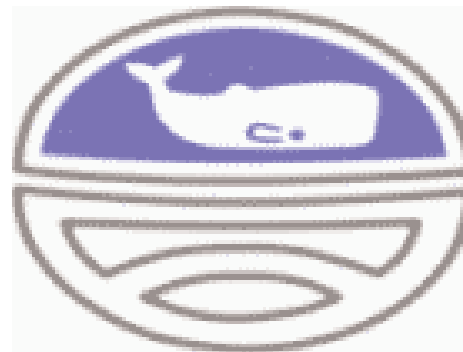
ACS sends out special thanks to West Coast Litho, Gardena, CA, for Spyhopper printing services.

ACS Represented at IWC Conference

ACS Board members Mason Weinrich and Kate Sardi each attended part of the International Whaling Commission 60th annual conference in Santiago, Chile in June, 2008. Travelling to the scenic foothills of the Andes mountains, Mason attended this year's pre-conference Scientific Committee meetings and Kate followed for the actual Commission sessions. The conference is traditionally adversarial, with emotions running high on all sides as issues span the cultural, economic, scientific, and humane concerns and interests surrounding cetaceans. Though final developments were limited, groundwork was established and continued for further study and progress. As Kate reports, "The gathering of minds, the sharing of knowledge, and the perspective on international decisions that the conference holds make it a priority for ACS involvement."

ACS Vice President, Mason Weinrich, representing the Whale Center of New England, attended the Scientific Committee sessions that precede the conference. A veteran of this Committee, Mason joined 200 scientists from over 40 countries who gather for eight days in preparation for the Commission meeting to compile a report that will provide scientific advice on topics the Commission has requested, make recommendations, and propose new issues that the scientific community would like to bring to the Commission's attention. Topic-oriented sub-committees meet during this pre-conference to gather specific input for the overall Committee report.

"My time was split between committees that dealt with management of whale watching world-wide, by-catch of whales and dolphins (both in fishing nets and by ship collision), and assessment of southern hemisphere fin and blue whale populations," said Mason. Other sub-committees discussed topics such as cetacean ecology and habitat, small cetaceans, use of DNA and other techniques to determine group separations, status of bowhead, right and gray whales, mathematical techniques by which quotas of



The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was established in 1946 to keep under review and revise as necessary the measures that govern the conduct of whaling throughout the world.

human "takes" would be sustainable, and stocks of whales hunted by aboriginal people.

The whale watching sub-committee set plans for a new world-wide study that will look at the effects of whale watch boats on key species to determine whether whale watching can impact vital rates in the animals' lives - from calving to survival rates. As a steering committee member of this planned study, Mason will, "...continue to be involved as we develop a full proposal for funding to present at next year's IWC meeting."

The scientific committee is developing a database for use by all IWC member nations to make available "...as much reported information as possible about each collision, whether from mariner reports or scientists' study of remains." Questions about the kill rates of fin whales in the Japanese market based on DNA testing were discussed, as were the recovery rates of humpback whales off of east and west Africa. "With little field data and lack of knowledge about connections between humpback populations for some countries, it can be tricky. Wrong assumptions that might show mistaken near-recovery population levels would be critical because of some countries' call for legalized coastal whaling of recovered populations," said Mason. While the

task was not complete, progress was made that will be continued in next year's meeting.

Upon the completion of the Scientific Committee meetings, Kate Sardi, ACS's Research Chair, attended her first IWC Commission meeting. "I couldn't help but be reminded of the United Nations. Tables were set out for each national delegation - 71 in all. As I put my earpiece in to listen to the translation, I began my experience of the legendary meeting, first-hand," said Kate. Though the first call to action was for a more cooperative meeting in which decisions were made by consensus, Kate said the high emotions and strong convictions on all sides soon took over.

Greenland had proposed to increase their Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW) quota for bowhead and humpback whales, based on the "needs" of the local population. This proposal was voted down (29 for and 36 against), and quotas remained at current levels, though the U.S. uncharacteristically voted for this proposal based on Scientific Committee recommendations.

Discussions continued on the "research" whaling conducted by Iceland and Japan, which is done supposedly to collect information for whale management. While there was no pending decision this year, Kate described a "firestorm of commentary from member nations." Anti-whaling nations called for research by non-lethal techniques, cited the small and possibly unnecessary amount of information gained from the collection, and suggested that the IWC should identify the research needs to define necessary whaling to fulfill a real need. Pro-whaling countries called for decisions consistent with the management of all species, citing the emotion that comes to play when whales are the species involved.



The Scientific Committee had provided data and registered concern for small cetaceans, particularly the Vaquita and Dall's porpoise. At the current by-catch rate, the Vaquita, now down to approximately 150 animals, will likely be extinct in five years. Mexico took the floor to announce that they have earmarked 15 million dollars to remove all gill nets from the Vaquita's home range. There was no discussion of Japan's Dall's porpoise drive fishery. Though the IWC passed two prior resolutions condemning the Dall's porpoise hunt as unsustainable, 88,000 Dall's porpoises have been killed since the second resolution. The Commission encouraged Japan to reduce their hunt based on the data and the majority opinion of the Membership that it is a critical move for sustaining the Dall's porpoise.

As Kate described, "We leave IWC 60 with few concrete developments in whaling efforts, but much knowledge shared and gained that we can build upon for future progress with a world-wide perspective."

You make it possible....

Our caring ACS members make it possible for us to be involved in critical events such as the IWC conference - an important part of fulfilling our mission to protect whales, dolphins, porpoises, and their habitats through education, conservation, and research. Tell your friends about ACS and direct them to our web site to learn more about the challenges cetaceans continue to face.

Join Us In Monterey

The American Cetacean Society is pleased to present its
11th Annual International Conference,
"Whales in a Changing World,"
November 13-16, Monterey Bay California



Join us as we take a look at challenges faced by cetaceans in today's changing world.

Saturday Agenda Includes:

- Plenary Session by Graham Burnett of Princeton on the History of Studying Whales
- Orcas in a Changing World
- SPLASH (Structure of Populations, Levels of Abundance, and Status of Humpbacks)
- Whaling in a Changing World
- Poster Session, Art Show, Book Signing
- Banquet featuring Ken Balcomb, sharing stories and photos from over 30 years of researching Southern Resident killer whales and other cetaceans around the world.

Sunday Agenda Includes:

- Plenary Session featuring Phil Clapham entitled "The Pursuit of the Fat and Wet"
- Whale Conservation in a Changing World
- Whaling in a Changing World

Join fellow whale lovers aboard the "Sea Wolf II" for a natural history trip in world-famous Monterey Bay.

See Details and Register online at www.acsonline.org

Important Upcoming Dates and Deadlines:

- October 15 - Video Submissions Due
- October 31 - Photo Contest Entries Due
- October 31 - Online Registration Closes
- October 31 - Hotel reservations deadline for special ACS - Embassy Suites Hotel, Monterey Bay - Seaside, \$169/night for a suite.

When you stay at the conference hotel you help defray event costs and help keep registration costs low. The hotel has offered conference attendees a special rate and has discounted many of our event costs. In order for the hotel to support the event in these ways, we need to fill a large number of overnight rooms. You'll enjoy their great amenities and the fun of mingling with your fellow attendees throughout the weekend.

Special thanks to the Embassy Suites and these sponsors:



supported by the



California Coastal Commission's
Whale Tail License Plate Grants Program

Chapters In Action -

This Issue Highlights Our Los Angeles and Puget Sound Chapters

Los Angeles -

Chapter President, Bernardo Alps

The gray whales are beginning to make their way down the coast from their Arctic feeding grounds to the warm waters off Baja California, and ACS/LA is preparing for their arrival. Volunteer naturalists in the Whalewatch program are attending classes every Tuesday evening at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro to be trained for the upcoming whale watching season. Classes began on the first Tuesday in October. From January through March, naturalists will give lectures to schools and other interested groups and go out on boats from participating landings to narrate the cruises and answer passenger questions.

The first day of December marks the beginning of the 29th season of the ACS/LA Gray Whale Census and Behavior Study, the longest running gray whale census in the world. Volunteer observers will scan the ocean from the observation patio at the Point Vicente Interpretive Center in Rancho Palos Verdes and record every passing gray whale during daylight hours until May 15. We can always use another pair of eyes!

The Whalewatch training trip on the "Voyager" out of Redondo Beach on December 26 will mark the official beginning of the gray whale watching season in Southern California.

The ACS/LA Lecture Series started out in September all with a presentation by Thomas I. White of Loyola Marymount University on his book "In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier." In October we welcome NOAA Enforcement Officer Christina Ramirez, who will speak on "Enforcing the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Other Environmental Laws;" and in November Pamela Govett, DVM, of the Western University of Health Sciences will speak on "Rescuing the Katrina Dolphins." ACS/LA lectures are free, open to the public and are presented on the last Tuesday of September through November and

January through May at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium.



*John Olguin speaks to Los Angeles members
Photo © Bernardo Alps*

For more information on all ACS/LA events and activities, please visit our website at <http://www.acs-la.org>. Make sure to check out the "News" section where we post links to cetacean-related news stories from around the world, and sign up for our e-newsletter to receive updates on events, activities, and action alerts. If you are on Facebook you can join the group ACS/LA Whales - another way to stay informed and connected.

SHOUT OUT FOR ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER!

October 23-25 is "Day of the Dolphin," where members do some beach time to count and document the presence of Bottlenose Dolphins along the OC coast. For more information, visit the OC chapter site at www.acsonline.org/oc.

Chapters In action, cont.

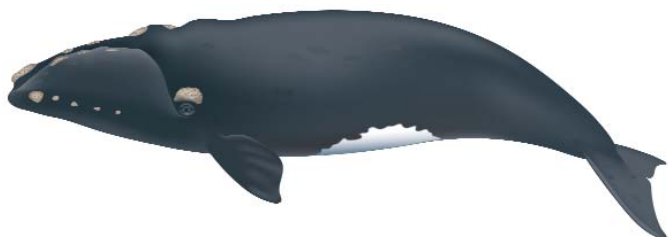
Puget Sound -

Chapter President, Uko Gorter

The Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society was re-established in the Summer of 1999, at the heels of the controversial Makah gray whale hunt. We believe the best way to protect cetaceans is by educating the public about these remarkable animals and the problems they face in their increasingly threatened habitats, which ACS Puget Sound does through its monthly Speaker Series, website, publications (e-newsletter), and educational outreach to schools and local events.

Our main focus is on cetacean conservation issues in the Pacific Northwest. However, we also look beyond our backyard to highlight conservation elsewhere in the world. ACS/PS has awarded numerous research grants to graduate and under-graduate students for research performed in our local waters. We have also given a few grants to research done in developing countries where funding is difficult or non-existing.

In 2004, our chapter installed a hydrophone on Vashon Island. A brain child of our vice-president, Ann Stateler, the Vashon Hydrophone Project (VHP) has proven to be a wonderful educational and



Uko is the creator of the wonderful cetacean illustrations used in ACS communications and educational pieces.

research tool. The VHP aids research of our endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale Community. Our free monthly Speaker Series have welcomed countless researchers, biologists, and authors who talk about their work or publications. The meetings are held every third Wednesday of each month at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, just north of Woodland Park Zoo.

Lastly, our Puget Sound Chapter enjoys wonderful partnerships with the Seattle Aquarium and other organization such as People for Puget Sound. Please check the chapter's website at www.acspugetsound.org for more information and regular updates.

Research Grants - Our Mission in Action

ACS is proud to provide research grants to scientists, students, and organizations that seek to learn more and take actions to protect our cetaceans and their environments. Here are some highlights from just one of our chapters. Since its inception, the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society has awarded more than ten research grants. While most were for research conducted in local waters of the Pacific Northwest, a few have been awarded to research done in developing countries.

This year we offered one \$1,000 grant restricted to research of Southern Resident Killer Whales within the waters of Oregon, Washington, or British Columbia, Canada. This grant was available to undergraduate students currently enrolled in a college or university and graduate students currently enrolled in, or accepted to a masters or doctorate program who met the evaluation criteria. The research was required to be conducted within the waters of Oregon, Washington State or British Columbia (Salish Sea). Researchers of any nationality were eligible to apply. There is no deadline for the completion of work; however, a brief report describing the progress/status of the research will be presented to ACS/PS within one year after receipt of funds. This report will also be featured in a future issue of our chapter newsletter, "Whulj". In addition, the Salish Sea grant recipient will be invited to present a talk at one of our chapter meetings. This year's recipient was Teresa Mongillo, a master's student at the University of Washington, School of Aquatic and Fisheries Sciences, who submitted a proposal titled "Accumulation and potential long-term exposure effects of polychlorinated

biphenyls (PCBs) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) in the Southern Resident killer whale." She will use an individual-based modeling approach to estimate the accumulation of PCBs and PBDEs in each individual killer whale in the Southern Resident population. The current accumulated levels will be projected into the future and run under various assumptions and scenarios to predict the potential long-term effects of contaminant exposure on the population. The results of this study will provide useful information for the recovery of this endangered species.

More information about the ACS grants can be found online. Access the chapter web sites from www.acsonline.org by clicking on About Us, and selecting the chapters.

Are You Ready for an Adventure?

There are two kinds of people in this world - those who have experienced a close encounter with a friendly gray whale in a Baja California lagoon and those who haven't. No amount of articles, photos or videos will give you an accurate idea of what to expect. You need to see the glow in someone's eye when they tell you about the experience to begin to understand how special it is. And the word-of-mouth dissemination is working, because the 12-day Baja Lagoons and Sea of Cortez trips are filling up earlier every year, with the 2010 season already going fast.

But there is a recently-added trip for 2009, April 8 to 19, that still has spaces left. It is late in the season for the gray whales in San Ignacio Lagoon. The locals will tell you that the first two weeks in April are a well-kept secret. Most whales will have departed, but the handful that remain are cows with calves that are now older and bolder and spend a lot of time interacting with the pangas (small whale-watching boats) and exhibiting playful behaviors. Most of the other aspects of the trip only get better as the season progresses; there are more wildflowers on the islands, more whales of several species in the Sea of Cortez (not that that is ever an issue) and the water is warmer for snorkeling.



Photo © Bernardo Alps.

This particular trip is being offered at the special price of \$3,295 per person, all-inclusive except for gratuities and the return from Cabo San Lucas.

There are also several dates still available for the five-day, fly-down San Ignacio Lagoon basecamp trip, where you stay in a safari-style tent camp right on the shores of the lagoon for a total immersion.

For more information, visit our Baja trips pages at <http://www.acsonline.org/whalewatchtrips/baja/index.html>. Call or e-mail Trips Chair Bernardo Alps for available dates, as trips fill up fast this close to the beginning of the season and others become available due to cancellations.

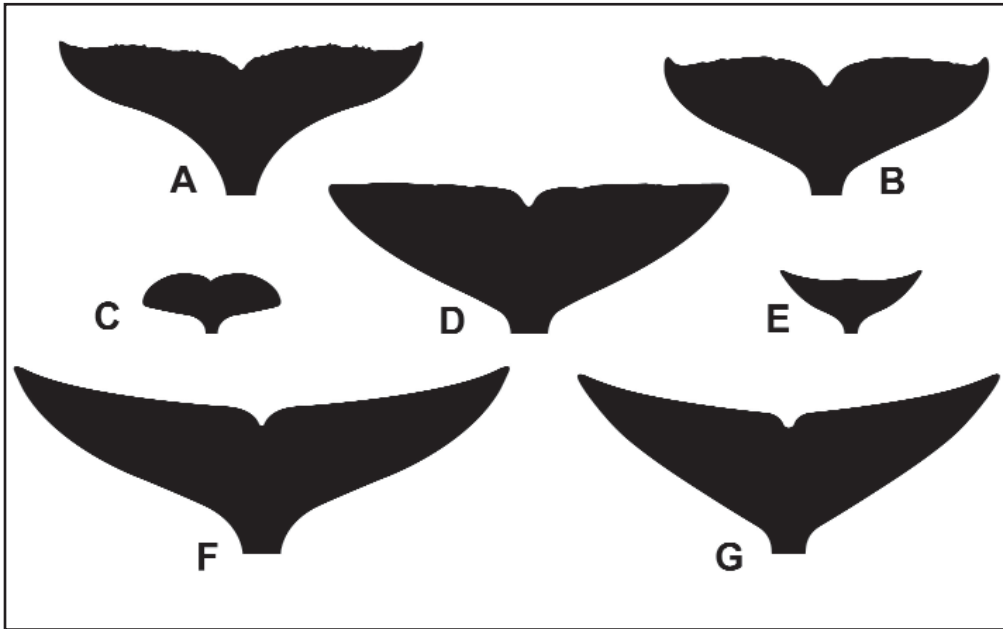
whaleadventures@acsonline.org

or call 310-548-7821

For Kids Who Love Whales & Dolphins

Know Your Flukes

Can you match the fluke to the whale?



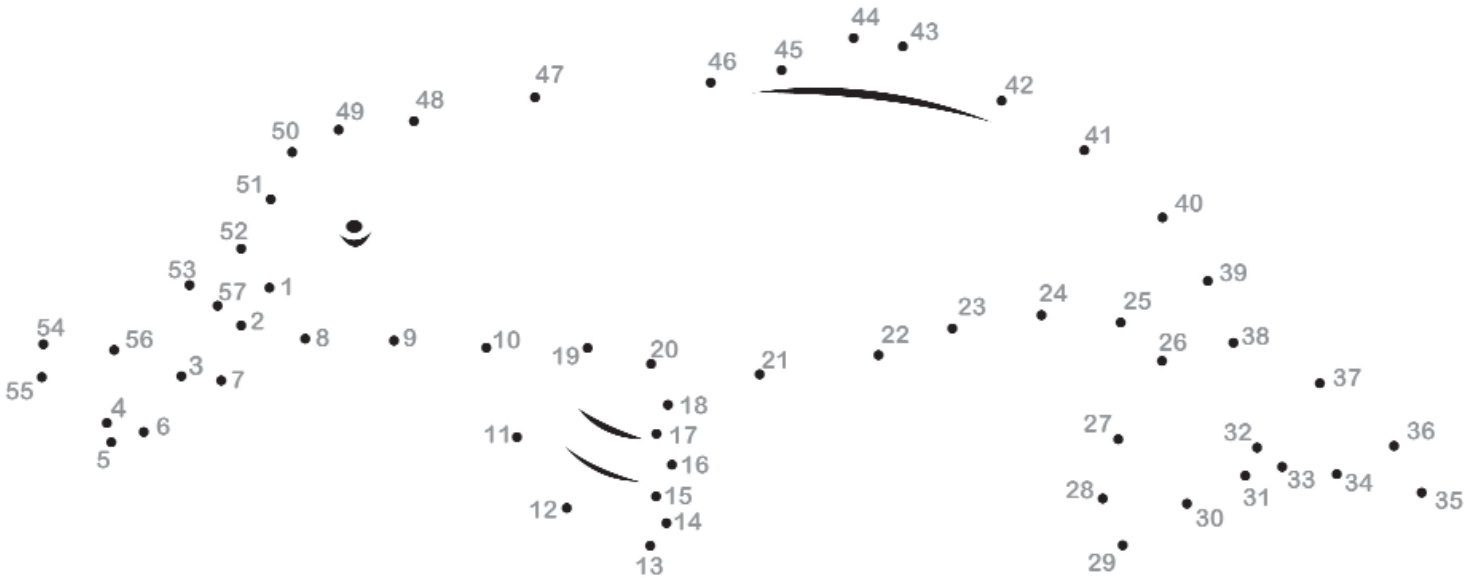
Match the letters by each fluke to its whale:

- Blue Whale
- Sperm Whale
- Right Whale
- Narwhal
- Humpback Whale
- Gray Whale
- Mesopododont (beaked whale)

(See answers below)

Connect the Dots

This near-blind cetacean does not live in the ocean - it lives in river systems of the Indian subcontinent. Can you name it?

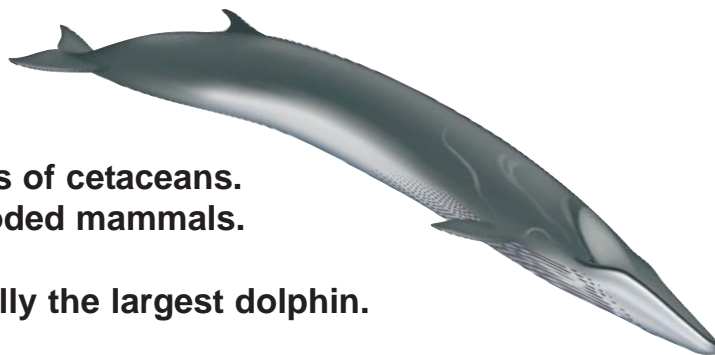


Fluke Answers:
 A = Humpback Whale, B = Gray Whale, C = Narwhal, D = Sperm whale, E = Mesopododont,
 F = Blue Whale, G = Right Whale
Connect the Dots Answer: Ganges River Dolphin

Fun Facts....

Did you know....

- There are about 80 different kinds of cetaceans. Like humans, they are warm-blooded mammals.
- The Orca (“killer whale”) is actually the largest dolphin.
- A fish’s tail moves side to side, but a cetacean’s tail moves up and down.
- There are two kinds of whales - those with teeth, and those that have “food strainers’ called baleen.
- Some cetaceans create their own sound waves that travel through the water to help them find their way.
- Cetaceans have one or two “nostrils” called blowholes on the top of their heads.



For the Whales...

ACS Board of Directors:

President - Kathy Zagzebski
 Vice President - Mason Weinrich
 Treasurer - Cindy Rustanius
 Conservation Chair - Jonathan Stern
 Research Chair - Katherine Sardi
 Past President - Patty Geary
 Member at Large, Trips Chair & L.A. Pres.- Bernardo Alps
 Member at Large, Webmaster - Diane Allen
 Member at Large, Publications - Katie Garrison
 Member at Large - Barbara Bennett
 Los Angeles Chapter Delegate - Diane Alps
 Monterey Bay Chapter Delegate & Pres. - Jerry Loomis
 Orange County Chapter Delegate & Pres. - Wellington Rogers
 Puget Sound Chapter Delegate & Pres.- Uko Gorter

Kaye Reznick - National Office Administrator

Read more about our Board members
 at www.acsonline.org



We are grateful for your membership in the American Cetacean Society, and the ongoing concern you show for our cetaceans through your support. We hope to increase the frequency of our national *Spyhopper* newsletter distribution to augment our active Website and send news directly to our membership. Do you have any cetacean news that might be of interest to our readers that you would like to share in future issues, such as special travels that brought you in touch with cetaceans, photos, local cetacean news? If so, please contact *Spyhopper* editor, Kaye Reznick, at kreznick@acsonline.org. Use of submitted articles will depend on available space in upcoming issues, continuity of content, and ACS Board approval.

**PLEASE BE SURE WE HAVE YOUR LATEST E-MAIL ADDRESS! SEND UPDATES TO
 KREZNICK@ACSONLINE.ORG**

The American Cetacean Society (ACS) works to protect whales, dolphins, and porpoises and their habitats through education, conservation, and research.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION TO THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY?

Donate online at www.acsonline.org or send your check payable to ACS or credit card information with this form to:
American Cetacean Society National Office, P.O. Box 1391, San Pedro, CA. 90733-1391

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ zip: _____
Phone: _____

Donation amount \$ _____

Method of Payment: Check / money order enclosed, payable to ACS (US dollars only), or
 Visa Mastercard American Express Discover

Card # _____ Expiration date: ____/____




AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY 

Spyhopper is published by the American Cetacean Society non-profit organization, U.S. postage paid, San Pedro, CA. The views and opinions expressed by the authors herein do not necessarily reflect those of ACS, nor those of the organizations with which the authors are affiliated. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced without the express written permission of ACS. Contact Kaye Reznick, *Spyhopper* editor, at kreznick@acsonline.org if you have questions, comments, or content suggestions. For general inquiries please contact ACS at ACS National Headquarters, P.O. Box 1391, San Pedro CA, 90733-1391.

Copyright 2008 by the American Cetacean Society, Illustrations by Uko Gorter

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Pedro, CA
Permit No. 98

Spyhopper
Newsletter of the American Cetacean Society
P.O. Box 1391
San Pedro, CA 90733-1391
 AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY