

Soundings



American Cetacean Society- Monterey Bay Chapter
PO Box H E, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2012

**MONTHLY MEETING AT HOPKINS MARINE STATION,
LECTURE HALL BOAT WORKS BUILDING
(ACROSS FROM THE AMERICAN TIN CANNERY OUTLET STORES)
MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

COMBINED NOV/DEC MEETING DATE:

Thursday, December 06, 2012

Time: 7:30 PM. PLEASE JOIN US AT 7:00 FOR REFRESHMENTS

Speaker: Kate Spencer Naturalist and Marine Life Artist

Title: A Monterey Naturalist in Antarctica

Any whale watching trip is enjoyable for so many reasons. It is always great to get out on the water! What you get to see is engaging and amazing! What also makes for a great cruise is what happens while everyone is waiting for something to happen. That's where an engaging and informative naturalist has their greatest challenge and opportunity: keeping things interesting when nothing is happening.

Kate Spencer is a wonderful local naturalist who brings an artist's eye to her craft. Her engaging personality, knowledge and experience turn those "waiting for something to happen stretches" into informative and engaging experiences. Any chance to go on a whale watching trip with Kate is a great opportunity!

For our December 6 program, Kate will share some observations and experiences from her most recent adventure on a small-ship expedition to the Southern Ocean. Included locales are Antarctica, South Georgia Island and the Falklands.

Please join us for this trip with Kate to the land that is truly down under. It promises to be informative and enjoyable: a great way to end the year for American Cetacean Society: Monterey Bay Chapter.

See you there,

Bob, Chair, ACS MB Programs Committee

After 6 years of service this is my final Press Release for the Chapter. Thank you all for the support you continue to give the Chapter in general and to the Programs Committee in particular. It has been a pleasure!

Bob Mannix, ACS MB, Programs Committee Chair

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CALENDAR/ BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS.....	2
ORCA MOTHERS CODDLE ADULT SONS.....	3
LAWSUIT FILED TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SEA TURTLES...	3
WORLD'S RAREST WHALE SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME	4
STATE AGENCY SAYS PG&E SEISMIC SURVEYS WOULD HURT MARINE MAMMALS	5
OFFSHORE KILLER WHALES FEED ON EXOTIC DEEP-SEA FISH OPAH IN MONTEREY BAY: 1 ST TIME DOCUMENTED .	6
SIGHTINGS.....	7
MEMBERSHIP.....	8

CALENDAR

Nov. 30th 12pm-1 pm: Hopkins Marine Station Lecture, Jerry Goldbogen Cascadia Research Collective

Jan 26-27: *Whalefest 2013*, Celebrate whales on Fisherman's Wharf and at Custom House Plaza with many activities planned. ACS Monterey Bay will have an educational outreach booth on both days and is seeking volunteers. Please contact Diane Glim at 831.214.1016 if you'd like to help.

Feb 1-2: 2013 Southern California Marine Mammal Workshop. Newport Beach, CA Keynote Speakers include Dr. Steven Katona and Dr. Brandon Southall

Feb 20-24: Pacific SeaBird Group 40th Annual Meeting. Portland, Oregon Hilton

Feb 2-8: 33rd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. Baltimore, Maryland

CONGRATULATIONS MADAME PRESIDENT!

Diane Glim was elected the American Cetacean Society's National president, which was announced at the 13th Biennial ACS Conference last week in San Diego. Diane has served as president of the Monterey Bay Chapter and has been an active ACS member since 1988.

Recognizing strength in numbers, Diane encourages whale and dolphin enthusiasts to become members of ACS, and will strive to unite chapters and at-large members towards a stronger voice for cetacean conservation, research and education.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Do you have whale people on your holiday shopping list? We will have whale-related gift ideas at the 12/6 meeting, in addition to festive refreshments. Bring your checkbooks! Randy Puckett has generously offered a bronze whale sculpture for another opportunity drawing, and tickets will be available at the meeting for \$10 each or 3 for \$25. Members who join or

renew their memberships with ACS on 12/6 will receive a beautiful whale poster by Uko Gorter.

THE GRAY WHALES ARE COMING!

Join the Monterey Bay Chapter for our annual Gray Whale Welcome Tour on Sunday morning, January 27, from 8am-10am with Monterey Whalewatching. With knowledgeable naturalists on board, we will be on the water during the peak of the gray whale migration. Tickets are \$30 for adults, \$15 for children, and all proceeds from this annual fundraiser go towards the ACS mission of providing funding for marine research grants, providing educational opportunities and the conservation of cetaceans. Elementary school students from Salinas who are studying whales will accompany us. Please send checks in advance to ACS/MB, PO Box HE, Pacific Grove, CA, 93950. Call Jerry Loomis for more info at 831.419.1051

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Ocean Journeys: Beginnings by Brandon L. Southall

Dreaming the Future: Re-imagining Civilization in the Age of Nature by Kenny Ausubel

Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic by David Quammen

Evolution: Making Sense of Life by Carl Zimmer

Jack O'Neil: It's always summer on the Inside

Dolphin Diaries: My 25 years with Spotted Dolphins in the Bahamas. By Dr. Denise L. Herzog

ORCA MOTHERS CODDLE ADULT SONS, STUDY FINDS

By Sindhya Bhanoo

Humans, pilot whales and killer whales are the only known species in which females have a prolonged period of menopause — a time of life when they cannot reproduce. Now, a study in the journal *Science* reports the purpose that menopause serves in orcas: for females to care for their sons and make sure their genes are passed on to future generations.

“Females have a really unique life history,” said Emma Foster, a marine biologist at Exeter University in England. “They stop reproducing in their 30s and 40s, but they can live into their 90s.”

Using 36 years of data on orcas in the Pacific Northwest, the researchers found that for males over 30, the death of a mother meant an eightfold increase in the likelihood of death within a year.

Killer whales stick with their mothers their entire lives. Dr. Foster suspects that mothers help sons with foraging or offer protection in encounters with other males. Among female orcas over 30, there was only about a threefold increase in the likelihood of death in the year after a mother’s death. “It makes more sense for the mothers to invest more in their sons, because there is no increased burden on the family group,” Dr. Foster said. “Children of sons move on to new family groups.”

The findings recall what some scientists term the “grandmother hypothesis” in humans — the idea that a long menopause allows women to focus not on their own fertility or on their adult children but on nurturing the next generation.

By “ensuring the success of their grandchildren they improve their reproductive success,” Dr. Foster said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/18/science/orca-mothers-coddle-adult-sons-study-finds.html>



LAWSUIT FILED TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SEA TURTLES, RARE ALBATROSS FROM DEADLY HAWAII SWORDFISH LONGLINE FISHERY

HONOLULU— Conservation groups filed a lawsuit today in federal district court challenging a new rule by the National Marine Fisheries Service that doubles the number of endangered sea turtles allowed to be entangled and killed by Hawaii’s longline swordfish fishery. The suit, brought under the Endangered Species Act and other federal environmental laws, was filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and Turtle Island Restoration Network. It aims to stop the Fisheries Service from allowing the fishery to cause the deaths of far too many endangered loggerhead and leatherback sea turtles, as well as migratory seabirds.

“The Hawaii longline fishery indiscriminately spreads its 60-mile long wall of deadly hooks without regard for the untold number of sea turtles, dolphins and seabirds it kills and injures,” said Todd Steiner, biologist and executive director of Turtle Island Restoration Network (SeaTurtles.org). “It is a shame that we must constantly file lawsuits to enforce even the modest protections that these threatened animals are legally guaranteed under the Endangered Species Act. It may be time to consider phasing out this irresponsible fishing technique. “The Fisheries Service has, yet again, abdicated its conservation duties and bowed to the longliners’ insatiable appetite for more endangered wildlife,”

said Earthjustice attorney Paul Achitoff, who has been challenging the fishery’s violations for many years. “We will continue to fight for these magnificent creatures as long as the Service continues to ignore the law.”

The new federal rule, opposed by conservation groups, rolled back

the significant protections that had been gained through a 2011 settlement between the same parties that capped the number of sea turtles that could be caught by the fishery to 17 endangered loggerheads and 16 critically endangered leatherbacks. The new rule allows the fishery to kill 34 loggerheads and 26 leatherbacks. Longline fishing is one of the biggest threats to the survival of these sea turtles, which get hooked on the fishing gear and drown. "The ocean's largest sea turtles will soon be extinct unless they're protected from drowning in fishing gear. It's tragic that these large commercial fisheries are killing animals by the thousands for the sake of a few profitable swordfish," said Miyoko Sakashita, the Center's oceans director. Swordfish longline vessels trail up to 60 miles of fishing line suspended in the water with floats, with as many as 1,000 baited hooks deployed at regular intervals. Sea turtles become hooked while trying to take bait or become entangled while swimming through the nearly invisible lines — encounters that can drown the turtles or leave them with serious injuries.

Seabirds also dive for the bait and become hooked; worldwide, longline fishing has caused serious declines in most albatross populations. Today's lawsuit therefore also challenges a permit issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service that allows the fishery to catch Laysan and black-footed albatrosses without requiring the mitigation method the Service has acknowledged could save these increasingly rare birds

<http://www.seaturtles.org/img/original/LeatherbackonlineNOAA.jpg>

WORLD'S RAREST WHALE SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME

ScienceDaily (Nov. 5, 2012) — A whale that is almost unknown to science has been seen for the first time after two individuals -- a mother and her male calf -- were stranded and died on a New Zealand beach. A report in the November 6th issue of *Current Biology* offers the first complete description of the spade-toothed beaked whale (*Mesoplodon traversii*), a species previously known only from a few bones.

The discovery is the first evidence that

this whale is still with us and serves as a reminder of just how little we still know about life in the ocean, the researchers say. The findings also highlight the importance of DNA typing and reference collections for the identification of rare species.

"This is the first time this species -- a whale over five meters in length -- has ever been seen as a complete specimen, and we were lucky enough to find two of them," says Rochelle Constantine of the University of Auckland. "Up until now, all we have known about the spade-toothed beaked whale was from three partial skulls collected from New Zealand and Chile over a 140-year period. It is remarkable that we know almost nothing about such a large mammal."

The two whales were discovered in December 2010, when they live-stranded and subsequently died on Opape Beach, New Zealand. The New Zealand Department of Conservation was called to the scene, where they photographed the animals and collected measurements and tissue samples.

The whales were initially identified not as spade-toothed beaked whales but as much more common Gray's beaked whales. Their true identity came to light only following DNA analysis, which is done routinely as part of a 20-year program to collect data on the 13 species of beaked whales found in New Zealand waters.

"When these specimens came to our lab, we extracted the DNA as we usually do for samples like these, and we were very surprised to find that they were spade-toothed beaked whales," Constantine says. "We ran the samples a few times to make sure before we told everyone." The researchers say they really have no idea why the whales have remained so elusive.

"It may be that they are simply an offshore species that lives and dies in the deep ocean waters and only rarely wash ashore," Constantine says. "New Zealand is surrounded by massive oceans. There is a lot of marine life that remains unknown to us."

STATE AGENCY SAYS PG&E SEISMIC SURVEYS WOULD HURT MARINE MAMMALS

By Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times
(Nov 6, 2012)Pacific Gas & Electric Co. was scrambling Monday to salvage plans to conduct seismic surveys using sonic blasts off the coast near the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant after a state regulatory agency staff report concluded it would disturb more than 7,000 marine mammals.

The California Coastal Commission staff, in a report released Friday, recommended that the commission deny PG&E's application for a coastal development permit needed to begin the project. The staff cited "significant and unavoidable impacts to marine resources," including threatened and endangered whales, porpoises and sea otters.

The commission plans to vote Nov. 14 on PG&E's request to survey 130 square miles off the coast of Morro Bay in San Luis Obispo County with acoustic pulses capable of penetrating as much as nine miles into the seafloor.

The utility believes the seismic survey is the best way to define the amount of movement that faults in the area are capable of producing, and to develop emergency preparedness plans.

Analysis of the sonic reflections would provide detailed 3-D images of the geometry, relationships and ground motions of several fault zones near the plant, which generates enough energy to meet the needs of more than 3 million residents of Northern and Central California.

"PG&E is committed to conducting this proposed seismic research safely and in an environmentally responsible manner," spokesman Blair Jones said. The utility's plan was developed carefully in consultation with state and federal agencies, he said.

Coastal Commission staff, however, said it could not determine whether alternative, less harmful technologies are available for the survey — or whether it is needed at all.

"The staff is saying that the potential impacts of this project are so severe that a seismic survey should be the last alternative," said Alison

Dettmer, the commission's deputy director of ocean resources. "Theoretically, they could come back later and apply again."

The staff's major concerns are the survey's potential effects on the basic biological functions of sea creatures in marine sanctuaries, and on a population of about 2,000 harbor porpoises that reside in and around scenic Morro Bay.

Harbor porpoises are acutely sensitive to man-made sounds. It is the species that would be most vulnerable to hearing loss and injury during the survey, which calls for a 235-foot vessel to tow a quarter-mile-wide array of submerged 250-decibel "air cannons" that would discharge every 15 seconds, night and day, for 17 days.

The entire population of harbor porpoises in Morro Bay would experience multiple disturbances and possibly be forced to move far outside their normal foraging grounds, which could threaten their survival, according to the staff report.

Overall, "more than 7,000 individual marine mammals from 17 species would be exposed to sound levels sufficient to result in some level of disturbance and behavioral disruption," the report said. In addition, the project would "result in mortality to about 5 million fish and invertebrate larvae in the project area and an unknown number of fish eggs."

PG&E said it plans to station observers certified in monitoring protected species on vessels and in airplanes to check for injured animals and carcasses. The utility said it would halt the testing if marine mammals, which rely on communication and sensing of their environment for a variety of critical life functions, venture close to the operation.

But commission staffers said that potentially high seas, windy conditions and poor night visibility "would cause these measures to be ineffective much of the time."

Michael Jasny, director of the Natural Resources Defense Counsel's marine mammal protection project, said the staff report "reflects a thorough understanding of the issues involved."

"Fundamentally, this project has not been justified along the coast where the impacts would be significant," Jasny said. "If you are going to impact the coast, you better make sure it is

essential to the public welfare and there is no safer way to do it."

OFFSHORE KILLER WHALES FEED ON EXOTIC DEEP-SEA FISH OPAH IN MONTEREY BAY: FIRST TIME DOCUMENTED!

FROM MONTEREY BAY WHALE WATCH

On October 31, our captain John Mayer spotted some killer whales just beyond the canyon edge, 8 miles northwest of Pt. Pinos. After watching the whales for a short time, he suspected that they were the offshore type. There are three types of killer whales found in the North Pacific, "transients" or mammal hunters (seen most often in Monterey), "residents" (fish hunters, which often travel through Monterey in winter, and are most often off Washington state), and the "offshores", a type which is least known with a few observations of them feeding on sharks and fish. Males of this type have a more rounded and narrow fin than transients and females, also with a rounded fin. They tend to have many notches and scratches in their dorsal fin, possibly from catching sharks. On a whale watch trip many years ago, we (Nancy Black and Richard Ternullo) observed them catch a blue shark. However, there are very few observations of the food types for offshores. The offshores are one population, in that all the whales (around 350-500 in population) range from Southern California to the Bering Sea. The groups typically range in size from 10 to over 100, with most sightings numbering 20-100 whales. Unlike the transients and residents which exist in distinct groups (such as southern residents, northern residents, Alaskan residents) that range over part of their entire population range, the offshores consist of one population. On this day, there were around 25 whales, as offshores are often found in large scattered groups. Just after they arrived, Captain John and naturalist Shawn Swing on our whale watch trip observed part of the group catch and feed on an Opah, an unusual fish usually found in warmer waters. Isiah Foulks, our deckhand, was quick enough to photograph the Opah with the whales. The fish was about 4' long and weighed about 100 lbs. Opahs are a laterally

flattened, silver fish, with gray spots and crimson (bright orange) fins, a very beautiful fish known to be occasionally caught by fishermen in offshore waters of Monterey with albacore. John first observed a group of about six whales bringing the Opah to the surface, including some bubble bursts by the whales to likely confuse the fish. John saw that one female type whale brought the fish up in its mouth and let it go as 3-4 whales tightly surrounded it on the surface, preventing the fish from escaping. The fish was definitely in the mouth of the whale and looked injured. After a short time, another whale grabbed the fish and pulled it under. Within a few minutes, the whales tore up the fish as several gulls and a few albatross were seen picking pieces and small gut parts out of the water. It looked similar to the way transients feed on their mammal prey, such as harbor seals, which they quickly consume. This is the first time that we know of offshore killer whales feeding on Opah, a very important observation adding to our knowledge of this type of whale. Alisa Schulman-Janiger and I (Nancy Black) dashed out after the whale watch returned and were able to locate the whales again with the help of boater Eric Mailander. We both had been working on our update to our previously published killer whale identification catalog, and Alisa has been up here for several weeks from Los Angeles. We followed the whales for just over four hours until dark as they slowly traveled south, and we left them a few miles off of Pt. Lobos. They remained in subgroups of 2-5 whales spread just under a mile. Some were curious about the boat and



Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries Service.

passed us closely, with a few tail slaps and

sypops. They were mostly in the travel mode and not obviously feeding. There were about five albatross' following the whales, as these seabirds often seem to follow killer whales in hopes of picking up leftover pieces if they disperse their prey near the surface. We were able to photograph the group and recognized many whales from previous sightings. We are analyzing the photos from this sighting to determine matches to other areas, as we have previously documented matches from Southern California, Monterey and as far as the Bering Sea. Everyone was very excited about the event, with some passengers amazed at how many killer whales were present and also appreciated seeing them in the wild. We will continue to look for this group again, or possibly more groups could pass through, as many offshores are seen on the outer coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands/Alaska during the summer (also some throughout the year) and are seen off California primarily during late fall to early spring (more in winter). Our last Monterey offshore sighting was March 2011 and the last California sighting was January 2012 off Southern California.

<http://www.montereybaywhalewatch.com/Features/KillerWhalesFeedingOnOpah121102.htm>

SIGHTINGS compiled by Monterey Bay Whale Watch. For complete listing and updates see www.gowhales.com/sighting.htm

Date	#	Type of Animal(s)
11/14 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	800-1000	Risso's Dolphins
	1	Mola Mola
11/13 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
11/12 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	1000	Risso's Dolphins
11/11 p.m.	1	Humpback Whale
	500	Risso's Dolphins
11/11 a.m.	1	Humpback Whale
	800	Risso's Dolphins
11/10 p.m.	1	Humpback Whale
	500	Risso's Dolphins
11/10 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	8	Killer Whales
	1000	Risso's Dolphins
	10	Harbor Porpoise
11/09 p.m.	1	Humpback Whale
	50	Risso's Dolphins
11/09 a.m.	5	Killer Whales
	100	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	200	Risso's Dolphins

	50	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
11/07 a.m.	100	Risso's Dolphins
11/06 a.m.	6	Killer Whales
11/05 p.m.	8	Risso's Dolphins
11/05 a.m.	3	Humpback Whales
	1000	Risso's Dolphins
11/04 pm.	2500	Risso's Dolphins
11/04 a.m.	2500	Risso's Dolphins
11/03 p.m.	2	Dall's Porpoise
11/03 a.m.	250	Risso's Dolphins
		Humboldt Squid
11/02 p.m.	10	Dall's Porpoise
11/02 a.m.	100	Long-beaked Common Dolphins
	10	Risso's Dolphins
11/01 a.m.	250	Risso's Dolphins
10/31 a.m.	9	Killer Whales
	20	Risso's Dolphins
10/30 a.m.	500	Risso's Dolphins
	10	Harbor Porpoise
		Humboldt Squid
10/29 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
		Humboldt Squid
10/29 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	100	Risso's Dolphins
10/28 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	75	Risso's Dolphins
10/28 a.m.	4	Humpback Whales
	50	Short-beaked Common Dolphins
	500	Risso's Dolphins
	15	Harbor Porpoise
10/27 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	10	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	10	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
	10	Harbor Porpoise
10/27 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	10	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	10	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
	15	Harbor Porpoise
		Schools of Humboldt Squid
10/26 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
10/26 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales (breaching)
	1	Killer Whale
		Schools of Humboldt Squid
10/25 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	30	Risso's Dolphins
10/25 a.m.	22	Killer Whales (transient type)
10/24 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	1	Minke Whale
	150	Risso's Dolphins
10/23 p.m.	2	Humpback Whales
10/23 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales
	300	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	200	Common Dolphins
	400	Risso's Dolphins
10/21 a.m.	2	Humpback Whales

** Skipped dates indicate no trip

American Cetacean Society
Monterey Bay Chapter
P.O. Box H E
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