

# Soundings



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

APRIL 2010

**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

### ***SPECIAL MEETING DATE***

DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2010

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

SPEAKER: THOMAS A. JEFFERSON, PH. D., SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE  
CENTER, NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

TITLE: **VIVA VAQUITA...CAN WE SAVE THE WORLD'S MOST ENDANGERED  
MARINE MAMMAL?**

“The Vaquita is the world’s smallest porpoise and the world’s most endangered cetacean. They live only in the northern reaches of the Gulf of California, Mexico. Scientists estimate that about 150 animals remain. This shy, elusive porpoise is disappearing primarily due to accidental entanglement in fishing nets set for shrimp. Following the loss of the Baiji (Yangtze River Dolphin) in 2006, the Vaquita is the next marine mammal in line for extinction.”\*

Under the leadership of President, Diane Glim, our chapter has championed the cause of the Vaquita. We have co-sponsored a web site: [www.vivavaquita.org](http://www.vivavaquita.org), which was designed by chapter member and vaquita researcher, Tom Kieckhefer. At-large board member Dida Kutz added a merchandising link: !Viva Vaquita La Tienda! to provide a fund raising opportunity, [www.printfection.com/vivavaquita](http://www.printfection.com/vivavaquita).

Additionally, other fund-raising opportunities include board member and renowned sculptor, Randy Puckett’s Vaquita Sculpture and our chapter’s special Vaquita Fund. Randy’s purchase arrangements can include a donation to our chapter to support this conservation effort.

Other chapter members involved in the Viva Vaquita Task Force include Alan and Sheila Baldrige, Maris Sidenstecker and board member Rene Rodriguez. ACS volunteer, Cheryl Butner is now working in Mexico to help save the Vaquita. Anyone is welcome to join the ACS MB VivaVaquitaTF....

In 2008 our speaker spent one month in Mexico photographing vaquitas (*Phocoena sinus*) and came away with the first high-quality images of this species ever taken and his crew showed that photo-identification of individuals is possible with this species. Dr. Jefferson plans to use photo-identification techniques to build-up a long-term catalog of individuals to investigate biological aspects that will aid in its future management and conservation.

After hearing Dr. Jefferson’s presentation last April, our Chapter decided to make a \$1000 grant in September 2009 to support his research on the Vaquita.

Please join us for this important update about the most endangered cetacean in the world. Find out the latest directly from this field investigator who works at the forefront of this conservation effort. Please come out and help make a difference

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

CALENDAR.....2

OSCAR WINNERS TRY TO KEEP  
WHALE OFF SUSHI PLATES.....3

### ***SPECIAL FEATURE***

**WILD KILLER WHALES IN  
MONTEREY BAY  
PAGE 4**

SIGHTINGS.....7

Membership.....8

## **CALENDAR**

Thru April 24: "World of Fishes" Exhibit at the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History. Exhibit will showcase diversity and biology of fishes from around the world.

April 10<sup>th</sup> (Sat) 8am-3pm. Sanctuary Currents Symposium: "Voices of Hope: Science and Innovation for the Ocean". Symposium will be held at CSUMB. ACS will be participating and is seeking volunteers. Contact Diane Glim at 646-8743 to volunteer.

April 16-18: Sea Otter Classic bicycle event at Laguna Seca. Viva Vaquita will have a booth to inform participants and spectators about the most endangered cetacean.

April 18 (Sun) 10am-4pm: Earth Day Whale Festival. Leo Carrillo State Park 35000 W. PCH Malibu, CA.

April 27-29: International Sea Turtle Society: 30th Sea Turtle Symposium. Goa, India.

May 17-21: 61st Tuna Conference. Lake Arrowhead, CA. "It's Not About the Catch but the Bycatch".

May 22 (Sat) 8am-4pm. ACS National Humpback Whale Fundraiser Trip will take place on the Condor Express Santa Barbara. For more info and to make reservations call Bernardo Alps at (310) 597-0449

May 29-31 Memorial Day weekend : 2-3 Day Blue Whale Search Aboard the Searcher. Spend 3 days in search of the great blue whale aboard San Diego based natural history boat the Searcher. Trip includes forays to the 9-mile bank and the Coronado Islands. Cost is \$395.00 For more info go to [searcher@bajawhale.com](mailto:searcher@bajawhale.com)

July 24 (Sat): ACS National Blue Whale Trip will take place on the Condor Express based out of Sea Landing in Santa Barbara, CA. Depart at 8am and return at 4pm. For more info and reservations call Bernardo Alps at 310-548-0966

August 25-29: Blue Ocean Film Festival. Monterey, CA. A global Ocean Film and Conservation Event ([www.bluefilmfest.com](http://www.bluefilmfest.com)). More Info To Follow.

August 28, 9am-1pm: ACS Monterey Bay Chapter Summer Whale Watch Fundraiser. Cost-\$50.00 Boat-Sea Wolf 2. Location-Monterey Bay Whale Watch-Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey, CA. Whales of the summer include blue, humpback, fin, minke and killer whales. For more info and reservations call Tony Lorenz at 831-901-7259

Nov.12-14: The American Cetacean Society 12th International Conference will be held in Monterey at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center. Local Monterey Bay ACS chapter volunteers are needed, and sign-ups will be available at the monthly meetings.

## **SUMMER CLASSES**

### **Point Lobos Summer Adventure 2010**

Session 1 - June 14 thru June 26

Session 2- July 5 thru July 16

Kids 9-15 will learn about sea life, mammals, birds, invertebrates, go hiking, build sand castles and much more. For more info go to [www.pointlobos.org](http://www.pointlobos.org).

### **UCSC Summer Marine Science Courses:**

Biology of Marine Mammals Bio 129

Session Two: July 26-August 27, 2010

Marine Science Illustration SCIC 126

Session Two: July 26-August 27, 2010

### **MLML Summer Marine Mammal Courses**

Classes meet at Moss Landing Marine Lab and will be taught by Dr. Jennifer Hurley Zeligs. For more info contact Dr. Hurley at 831-771-4191.

Session 1: Working with Marine Mammals Bio 348. June 14-20 9:30-5:30 M-F

Session 2: Techniques and Theories of Animal Training Bio 347. June 28-July 4 9:30-5:30 M-F

## OSCAR WINNERS TRY TO KEEP WHALE OFF SUSHI PLATES

By Jennifer Steinhauer March 8, 2010

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — It is sport among black belt sushi eaters here to see just how daring one's palate can be. But even among the squid-chomping, roe-eating and uni-nibbling fans, whale is almost unheard of on the plate. It also happens to be illegal.

Yet with video cameras and tiny microphones, the team behind Sunday's Oscar-winning documentary film "The Cove" orchestrated a Hollywood-meets-Greenpeace-style covert operation to ferret out what the authorities say is illegal whale meat at one of this town's most highly regarded sushi destinations.

Their work, undertaken in large part here last week as the filmmakers gathered for the Academy Awards ceremony, was coordinated with law enforcement officials, who said Monday that they were likely to bring charges against the restaurant, the Hump, for violating federal laws against selling marine mammals.

"We're moving forward rapidly," said Thom Mrozek, a spokesman for the United States attorney for the Central District of California. Mr. Mrozek declined to say what charges could be brought against the restaurant, but said they could come as early as this week.

In the clash of two Southern California cultures — sushi aficionados and hard-core animal lovers — the animal lovers have thrown a hard punch.

"This isn't just about saving whales," said Louie Psihoyos, the director of "The Cove," a documentary that chronicles eco-activists' battles with Japanese officials over dolphin hunting. "But about saving the planet."

The sushi sting actually began in October, when the documentary's associate producer and "director of clandestine operations," Charles Hambleton, heard from friends in the music industry that the Hump, a highly rated sushi restaurant next to the runway at the Santa Monica airport, was serving whale.

Mr. Hambleton, who has worked as a water safety consultant on Hollywood movies like "Pirates of the Caribbean," created a tiny camera for two animal-activist associates to wear during a monster session of omakase — a sushi meal in which the chef picks all the dishes.

Video of their meal shows the two activists, both vegan, being served what the waitress can be

heard calling "whale" — thick pink slices — that they take squeamish bites of before tossing into a Ziploc bag in a purse.

The samples were sent to Scott Baker, associate director of the Marine Mammal Institute at Oregon State University. Professor Baker said DNA testing there revealed that the samples sent to him were from a Sei whale, which are found worldwide and are endangered but are sometimes hunted in the North Pacific under a controversial Japanese scientific program. "I've been doing this for years," Professor Baker said. "I was pretty shocked."

Serving unusual fish imported from Japan is the hallmark of many high-end sushi restaurants here, and whale meat is often found in Japanese markets, Professor Baker said. But he said he had never heard of it being served in an American restaurant.

Workers at the Hump, which according to its Web site is named after an aviation slang term for the Himalayas, directed questions to a lawyer.

"We're going to look into the allegations and try to determine what is true," said the lawyer, Gary Lincenberg, in a telephone interview. "Until we have done that, I don't have any other comment."

Professor Baker contacted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a marine conservation unit of the Department of Commerce, which began its own investigation, eventually looping in the United States attorney in Los Angeles.

Mr. Psihoyos's team — a far-flung band of activists who use film making to highlight environmental causes — knew they would be together in Los Angeles for the Oscars, and so sting operations two and three were hatched. On Feb. 28, team members split up between the sushi bar and a restaurant table and ordered sushi and communicated via text message with Mr. Psihoyos, who waited in a car in the parking lot. Mr. Psihoyos served as an electronic envoy between the investigators at the sushi bar, who were witnessing the chopping of fish and whale, and those sitting at a table:

"They're eating blowfish!" read one of the text messages. "Toro and sea urchin, nothing exciting," another said. "Whale coming now!"

Next waiters identified a meaty course of whale, referring to it at times by its Japanese name, kujira, at a cost of \$60, according to a federal affidavit. (The total bill exceeded \$600 for two, with very little sake.)

Last week, several federal agents, including one from the Border Patrol and one who speaks Japanese, joined their team. Once again, the chef and

wait staff more than once identified the meat as whale, the affidavit said, and it may have been obtained from a Mercedes parked behind the restaurant.

Armed with a search warrant, federal officials on Friday went searching for evidence from the restaurant, including marine mammal parts as well as various records and documents. The possession or sale of marine mammals is a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and can lead to a year in prison and a fine of \$20,000.

Mr. Psihoyos, a former photojournalist who heads a nonprofit through which he makes his films, said that environmental action is more motivating to him than awards.

"Once you become sensitized to these animals you want to save them," he said over breakfast Monday, still bleary from his big Oscar night.

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## **MONTEREY BAY WHALE WATCH FEATURE: WILD KILLER WHALES IN MONTEREY BAY**

By Nancy Black, Marine Biologist and  
owner of Monterey Bay Whale Watch

As an expert marine biologist who has studied Killer Whales in the wild for 23 years, Nancy Black has been interviewed by over 100 different media outlets to respond to the issue of captive Killer Whales and the death of a Killer Whale trainer at Sea World on February 24, 2010. She has prepared this feature story to provide information about wild Killer Whales, with special emphasis on the Killer Whales of Monterey Bay.

I would like to briefly describe the lives of wild Killer Whales in Monterey Bay, off central California. Killer Whales occur year-round in Monterey Bay, although on an unpredictable basis. We can encounter them on our whale watching trips any time of the year, although the peak time for sightings is April and May, when they frequent Monterey Bay to hunt Gray Whale calves.

In addition to Killer Whale sightings, our Monterey Bay Whale Watch trips focus on watching Humpback Whales, Blue Whales, Gray Whales, several dolphin and porpoise species, seals, sea lions, and sea otters. It's not unusual for us to see groups of thousands of dolphins, as Monterey Bay is an extremely nutrient-rich and productive area for a tremendous diversity of marine life. Given this large diversity of marine mammals that feed or migrate through Monterey Bay, Killer Whales frequent this

area to hunt other marine mammals as their natural prey, making Monterey Bay an ideal place for me to conduct my year-round and life-long study of these truly amazing, highly intelligent social mammals.

### TYPES OF KILLER WHALES

Three different eco-types of Killer Whales occur in Monterey Bay: 1) Transient Killer Whales (mammal hunting), 2) Resident Killer Whales (fish eating), and 3) Offshore Killer Whales (feeding on fish, sharks, and squid). Each population type is genetically distinct from the others, and they do not interact among types. They have distinct vocalizations, look physically different to the trained person, exhibit different social groupings and hunting tactics, and specialize on different prey. They may eventually each be considered separate species, as they do not intermix.

### RESIDENT KILLER WHALES VISITING MONTEREY BAY

I was the first to discover that the "resident type" or fish hunting Killer Whales that are normally found in the Pacific Northwest (Southern Residents - J, K, and L pods) traveled all the way to Monterey Bay. Since this first sighting in 2000, we have observed them at least once during the winter on several years since then. These whales are now considered endangered as their preferred food source, Chinook Salmon, has drastically declined and the Killer Whales appear to have expanded their range in search of these fish. All our sightings of these whales are immediately reported to Ken Balcomb at the Center for Whale Research in Friday Harbor, Washington as Ken has been studying this group for over 30 years. See our earlier feature articles about Resident Killer Whales in Monterey Bay in 2000 and again in 2003.

### OFFSHORE KILLER WHALES

Less is known about the Offshore Killer Whales as they are unpredictable in occurrence and we generally observe them during the winter, in large groups of 50 -100 whales. We found that these whales have the longest range movements discovered so far for any Killer Whale population and we have recently co-authored a scientific paper on them. Individual whales identified in Monterey Bay have traveled to southern California and as far north as the Bering Sea in Alaska.



#### TRANSIENT KILLER WHALES

The "transients" or mammal hunting Killer Whales are the type most frequently sighted in Monterey Bay and we have over 130 individual whales in our catalog. The whales seen in Monterey Bay range from southern California to Washington, with a few sighted as far as British Columbia and Alaska. Certain groups are seen more often than others with a home range centered more around Monterey Bay. These whales are famous for hunting Gray Whale calves in Monterey Bay during the spring and our work with these whales has been featured on many nature programs on Television. For one example, see our feature about the National Geographic Explorer TV Program on Killer Whales of Monterey Bay.

We have observed these whales hunting other mammals as well, such as Harbor Seals, Elephant Seals, California Sea Lions, Dall's Porpoise, Harbor Porpoise, Minke Whale, Pacific White-sided Dolphins, Long-beaked Common Dolphins, Risso's Dolphins, and Bottlenose Dolphins.

Monterey Bay is the only place in the world where Killer Whales can be observed in an easily accessible area hunting and feeding on Gray Whales. This is a natural event and although Killer Whales are found throughout the world and are the most widely distributed whale, occurring from both poles to the tropics, and they do hunt large baleen whales in other areas, Monterey Bay is the only place to predictably observe this truly amazing event in nature, a battle among whale species, rivaling any other incredible predation events in nature, such as lions hunting buffalo or elephants, cheetahs chasing down antelopes at high speed, or wolves hunting bison and moose.

#### KILLER WHALE CULTURE

Killer Whales are true predators and are highly intelligent, social mammals living in a

American Cetacean Society- Monterey Bay

matriarchal society (with groups based on adult females and their offspring), exhibit complex communication patterns (similar to a language), and exhibit culture - with hunting strategies and knowledge of where to find prey, time of year to find specific prey and how to hunt different prey species successfully passed on among generations by females to their young. Even the males will generally stay with their mothers through life and mate with different family groups that are not closely related to them but still part of their population type. Females can live up to 80-90 years and males 50-60 years, with males reaching lengths of 30' and 6 tons and females up to 26' and 4 tons.

#### KILLER WHALES HUNTING DOLPHINS IN MONTEREY BAY

As a recent example of the natural life of these incredible animals, I am including photos of a recent event, as it is impossible to describe here all the amazing predation events we have observed over the years. On January 10th of this year (2010) on our whale-watching trip we encountered a group of over 800 long-beaked common dolphins as they were fleeing from a group of eight Killer Whales. The dolphins were flying out of the water at high speed away from the Killer Whales. We passed the dolphins and caught up with the Killer Whales just after they caught a dolphin. When hunting dolphins, Killer Whales often track a distance of a quarter mile or more behind the school without alerting the dolphins to their presence. The Killer Whales are usually spread out over several hundred yards and wait for an opportunity to catch a dolphin by surprise. The whales will try to isolate a dolphin and come from below and often will toss the dolphin in the air by their head or flukes, while the other Killer Whales will all gather and several whales will work together to eventually kill the dolphin.



On our January trip, we arrived just after the Killer Whales caught the dolphin and had begun to feed on it. They spent just over 30 minutes feeding and sharing the prey among the group members before they started to continue on. After they fed on the dolphin, they became very social as they often do after such feeding events. The Killer Whales began to breach and spy-hop, with lots of vocalizations (as they are very quiet vocally before a kill), exhibiting a very excited and high-energy state. It was incredible to observe their social behaviors as they continued this for nearly an hour, possibly a sort of "celebration" after the hunt. After this they continued traveling north and eventually slowed down and spread out again over half a mile. We followed them for several miles into the sunset before we headed back.

Killer Whales don't stay in one area for long, otherwise their prey would move away; instead they range hundreds of miles along the coast and frequent Monterey Bay periodically. Passengers on the trip were completely awestruck to have witnessed such an amazing event and felt it was once in a lifetime opportunity for many.



#### REWARDS OF VIEWING WHALES AND DOLPHINS IN THE WILD

I expressed to everyone that seeing Killer Whales in the wild is so much more rewarding and enriching than watching them in captive "shows" where they are kept in an unnatural and small environment for such highly intelligent social animals. Times have changed and I think many people would prefer to see animals in their natural environment rather than in a captive situation where they are made to perform for crowds of people.

If you have more questions about wild Killer Whales, please send an email or call and I will try to answer your questions. The upcoming months of April and May (best mid April through mid May) are the next best time to view these animals in the wild. Although we don't see the Killer Whales every day – generally several times a week or more – we see humpback whales daily and dolphins at this time as

well. Many people come out with us more than once at this time of year to increase their chances of viewing Killer Whales and have an opportunity to see them hunt Gray Whales.

The humpback whales are also a highlight as they arrive in Monterey Bay to feed on small fish and squid from April through December and Gray Whales migrate through the area from December through May. Several dolphin species occur year-round and are frequently seen on our trips as well.

#### CHEMICAL CONTAMINANTS AND KILLER WHALES

During my research in collaboration with the National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NOAA) I collected small biopsy samples of several different Killer Whales and found that the whales have extremely high levels of chemical contaminants such

as PCB's, DDT's, and flame retardants, all of which can be detrimental to these animals by affecting their reproductive rate and immune system. However, it's hard to prove a direct link from these chemicals to physical effects on

the whales.

The California transients I sampled in Monterey Bay have some of the highest known levels of these chemicals sampled so far for any Killer Whales. Unfortunately, California is a highly populated area and previous dumping and runoff of these chemicals into the oceans has taken place. Although some of these chemicals are banned, flame-retardants are still in use and all of these toxic chemicals do not degrade in the ocean and can linger in the marine environment over many years.

Since Killer Whales are top predators, they bio-accumulate these chemicals from the food chain as it's passed up to higher level prey. The males can never get rid of the chemicals they accumulate but the females pass these chemicals along to their offspring and their first-born whales have the highest levels.

This is something we hope to continue monitoring in the future as well as looking at the survival of calves. In general, calf mortality could be as high as 40% and this could be related to the

chemicals. Although the transients are not currently endangered, the chemical contaminants that are already in the ocean could pose a risk to their population and flame-retardants are still in use, though they are slated to be banned in the near future.



#### ABOUT NANCY BLACK AND MONTEREY BAY WHALE WATCH

Besides leading whale watching trips as captain and marine biologist/naturalist guide, Nancy Black has also been conducting research on these whales for over 20 years and often uses her small research inflatable for this purpose. She has co-authored several research papers on these whales, published and was lead author on the first photo-identification catalog of Killer Whales for California and Mexico (as each whale can be identified by distinct markings on the dorsal fin and saddle patch), provided updated research poster presentations during each Biennial Conference for the Society of Marine Mammalogy, often gives public presentations on Killer Whales (for such organizations as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Monterey Bay Aquarium, American Cetacean Society, Long Beach Aquarium, Long Marine Laboratory/UC Santa Cruz, Point Lobos State Reserve Docents, and others); and her research has been featured on many nature shows (Blue Planet - Discovery Channel; Secret Killer Whales of Monterey Bay - National Geographic; Whale Attack - Animal Planet; Killer Whales/Gray Whales TV Series with Jean Michael Cousteau of Ocean Futures on PBS, and others).

Nancy Black started Monterey Bay Whale Watch because she has a true passion for these animals and wanted to observe and learn more about them year-round in the wild. The Monterey Bay Whale Watch group stands alone as true experts on these animals, therefore providing the highest quality

whale watching trips in the area and U.S., carefully respecting these animals by following all whale watch guidelines.

See more photos and links to videos at [www.montereybaywhalewatch.com/features/wildkillerwhales1002.htm](http://www.montereybaywhalewatch.com/features/wildkillerwhales1002.htm)

**SIGHTINGS** compiled by Monterey Bay Whale Watch. For complete listing and updates see [www.gowhales.com/sighting.htm](http://www.gowhales.com/sighting.htm)

Date	#	Type of Animal(s)
3/18 p.m.	9	Gray Whales
3/18 a.m.	3	Killer Whales (transient type)
3/17	5	Gray Whales
3/16 p.m.	20	Gray Whales
3/16 a.m.	5	Killer Whales (transient type)
	16	Gray Whales
	30	Risso's Dolphins
3/15 p.m.	18	Gray Whales
3/15 a.m.	3	Killer Whales (transient type)
	16	Gray Whales
3/14 p.m.	9	Killer Whales (transient type, predation on pinniped)
	7	Harbor Porpoise
3/14 a.m.	12	Gray Whales
	45	Risso's Dolphins
3/12 a.m.	11	Gray Whales
3/11 p.m.	25	Gray Whales
3/11 a.m.	11	Gray Whales
3/7 p.m.	4	Gray Whales
3/7 a.m.	16	Gray Whales
	700	Pacific White-sided Dolphins
	1400	Risso's Dolphins
	450	Northern Right Whale Dolphins
3/6 p.m.	14	Gray Whales
3/6 a.m.	9	Gray Whales
	180	Risso's Dolphins
3/5 p.m.	8	Killer Whales
	4	Gray Whales
3/5 a.m.	14	Gray Whales
3/4 p.m.	6	Gray Whales
3/4 a.m.	8	Gray Whales
3/1 p.m.	12	Gray Whales
	120	Risso's Dolphins
3/1 a.m.	14	Gray Whales
	180	Risso's Dolphins

Skipped dates indicate no trip

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