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

MEETING DATE:
Thursday, April 28, 2016
Time: 7:30 PM
PLEASE JOIN US AT 7:00 FOR REFRESHMENTS

Speaker: Giancarlo Thomae
Photographer, marine biologist, and Captain for Elkhorn Slough Safari

Captain and marine biologist Giancarlo Thomae has spent his memorable life growing up on the Monterey Bay. He started going fishing with Ken Stagnaro when he was six. His parents paid the deckhands 20 bucks a trip (a lot of money back then to make sure he didn't kill himself on their watch).

Most of the fisheries crashed when he was a sophomore in high school, and the whale populations started to rebound. He started going out whale watching religiously with Monterey Bay Whale Watch, then got his first job with Sanctuary Cruises which lasted five years.

When the whale populations sky rocketed and near shore sightings increased in 2012, he started venturing into the deep waters of the Monterey Bay to photograph whales and sharks from his kayak. Giancarlo is a major go to source for the media and academia, and a lot of his work is published world wide.

Giancarlo earned his degree from UCSC in Marine Biology, is the captain for Elkhorn Slough Safari, and is honored to be the April speaker for the ACS Monterey Bay Chapter.

Please join us for refreshments before the program begins. More information is available on our website, www.acsmb.org.

Next month: Mauricio Alvarez Ruiz, Expedition Director on the Stella Australis, will be our speaker on May 26.
CALENDAR

**Apr. 17:** 2016 Oceans Colloquium at Moss Landing Marine Lab. On Sunday, April 17th from 9:00am-4:00pm, MARINE’s 7th Annual Ocean Colloquium will focus on innovative science and policy communication.

**Apr. 30 – May 1:** Moss Landing Marine Labs Open House in Moss Landing, CA. Scheduled events include seminars, SF Ocean Film Festival movies, field trips, and SLEWTHS demonstrations. 9 AM to 5 PM. For more information go to openhouse.mlml.calstate.edu

**May 14:** SF Bay ACS 2016 Symposium: “Our Changing Oceans” at the SFSU Romberg Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies Romberg Bay Conference Center. Speakers will include John Calambokidis, Jeremy Goldbogen, Kate Stafford, and Dan Costa. 9 AM to 6 PM. For more information go to www.acs-sfbay.org.

**Oct. 3-7:** 9th Annual California Islands Symposium at the Marriot Beach Hotel in Ventura, CA. This symposium will present the most recent scientific findings on the Channel Islands and islands off the west coast of Baja California. All day field trips will be scheduled to the Channel Islands with Island Packers in Ventura, CA. For more information go to www.medscience.org/CaliforniaIslandsSymposia

**Nov. 11-13:** American Cetacean Society’s Biennial Meeting at the Embassy Suites in Monterey, CA. This conference will bring together some of the world’s pre-eminent marine mammal scientists for a three day symposium in one of the world’s most biodiverse cetacean hotspots. This conference will also offer an all day whale watching trip on Friday, November 11 with Monterey Bay Whale Watch.

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS


**American Cetacean Society – Monterey Bay Chapter**

**Annual Summer Whale Watching Fundraiser**

**Saturday, June 25, 2016**

9:00 am - 1:30 pm

This annual fundraiser will explore the marine mammal rich waters of Monterey Bay in search of Blue and Humpback Whales.

Humpback Whales have been seen daily for weeks and Blue Whales have already been observed on several occasions in both March and April of this young feeding season.

We will also be on the lookout for Fin Whales, Killer Whales, and various species of dolphin.

*More information to follow in the May edition of Soundings!*

**RECAP: THE HARBOR SEALS OF HOPKINS MARINE STATION**

Apr. 3, 2016 — Harbor seals dominated the ACSMB meeting of March 31 when Thom and Kim (Worrell) Akeman told us about the rotund animals that have lived around Hopkins Marine Station for the past 49 years.

The beach behind the Miller Library, just steps from where we have our monthly programs, has become the major harbor seal rookery on the...
Monterey Peninsula and the pupping season had just started. It swung into high gear the weekend after the presentation with six births as people watched from the recreation trail.

While Kim showed us fascinating and charming photos and videos from the more than 100,000 in her files, Thom told us a little history of the rookery.

Harbor seals, like most marine mammals, were hunted to near-extinction by the middle of the 19th century. Another century passed before they started to reappear in this area. Six hauled out in the rocks behind the Hopkins buildings in 1967 and as the colony grew slowly, some swum around Cabrillo Point to haul out on the beach behind the library. It is protected from the strongest of ocean waves by the rocks of Cabrillo Point, from the people along the recreation trail by the chain-link fence along the Hopkins property line. Those barriers create a safe place for animals to sleep.

Even as the colony grew, the pregnant females still returned each spring to the established rookery at Cypress Point in Pebble Beach. But in 1998, El Nino conditions whipped up such storm waves that some of the pregnant seals couldn’t get there so 30 to 35 delivered their pups on the Hopkins beach. Since then, 800 to 1,000 pups have been born at Hopkins, some of them from fourth or even fifth generation moms that now know this as their rookery.

It is the best place to watch the harbor seals and the pupping on the Central Coast because all the other places that have sizeable rookeries – including Cypress Point and Point Lobos – have had to close off the areas during pupping season to protect them from people and dogs.

There have been as many as 100 pups born here in recent years – about 80% of them on the Hopkins beach, the others on pocket beaches in a spillover rookery a quarter-mile away at the bottom of Pacific Grove’s 5th Street.

The colony, which ranges 15 miles along the rocky coastline between Fisherman’s Wharf and Carmel Beach, has grown to as many as 700 animals in recent years. When the ocean is healthy and full of food, the harbor seals are healthy, eat well, reproduce in good numbers, survive in good numbers and the colonies grow and expand.

Unfortunately, the ocean isn’t that healthy right now with climate change warming the water and El Nino conditions intensifying the heat this year. The nearshore water has been so warm there’s not enough food in it for all the animals that need it. The Akemans said they recently realized they are watching a die off -- not just of harbor seals, but other mammals and birds that rely on the food supply close to the shoreline.

They are both Bay Net docents, members of the organization Milos Radakovich and Rachel Saunders started in 1995 to support the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Thom has been in Bay Net for 13 years, Kim for 6. Kim helps the seals update their Facebook page, “The Harbor Seals of Pacific Grove.” If you’re not on Facebook, you can Google it as it’s a public access page updated almost daily during the pupping season.

Contributed by Thom Akeman

**WHALES ARE STARVING - THEIR STOMACHS FULL OF OUR PLASTIC WASTE**

_by Philip Hoare_

Mar. 30, 2016 — In January, 29 sperm whales stranded on shores around the North Sea. The results of the necropsies (the animal equivalent of autopsies) of 13 of those whales, which beached in Germany, near the town of Tönning in Schleswig-Holstein, have just been released. The animals’ stomachs were filled with plastic debris. A 13-metre-long fishing net, a 70cm piece of plastic from a car and other pieces of plastic litter had been inadvertently ingested by the animals, who may have thought they were food, such as squid, their main diet, which they consume by sucking their prey into their mouths.

Robert Habeck, environment minister for the state of Schleswig-Holstein, said: “These findings show us the results of our plastic-oriented society. Animals inadvertently consume plastic and plastic waste,
which causes them to suffer, and at worst, causes them to starve with full stomachs.” Nicola Hodgins, of Whale and Dolphin Conservation, added: “Although the large pieces will cause obvious problems and block the gut, we shouldn’t dismiss the smaller bits that could cause a more chronic problem for all species of cetacean – not just those who suction feed.”

The notion of these vast, sentient and placid creatures being stuffed with our trash is emblematic enough of the unequal relationship between man and sperm whale. The fact that the latter possess the largest brains of any animal that has ever lived only underlies this disconnection.

Sadly, to anyone who follows the ongoing story of our impact on cetaceans, the terrible predicament of German whales is not new – although the scale of last January’s strandings is. In 2011, a young sperm whale was found floating dead off the Greek island of Mykonos. Its stomach was so distended that scientists believed that the animal might have swallowed a giant squid. But when they dissected its four stomachs (sperm whales, although predators, have digestive processes similar to ruminants), they found almost 100 plastic bags and other pieces of debris. One bag had the telephone number of a souvlaki restaurant in Thessaloniki. The scientists joked, grimly, that the whale could not call up to complain about the damage caused by their product.

The scale of the fate of the North Sea whales calls to mind the nesting albatrosses of Midway Island, so poignantly recorded by photographer Chris Jordan. He documented the skeletal remains of young chicks, so bloated with the plastic they had been mistakenly fed by their parents – from beer can loops and bottle tops to cigarette lighters – that they had starved from lack of nutrition.

Our use and abuse of animals seems in inverse proportion to the almost ritual reverence in which we purport to hold them. Whales have become the marine icon of ecological threat. We pay obeisance to their grandeur. But sometimes I wonder if it isn’t all an illusion. We congratulate ourselves for having stopped hunting them (well, most of them). Yet many thousands of cetaceans are compromised or killed by the pollution we allow to escape into the ocean. We cannot make the direct connection between the plastic bottles of water and what they are doing to the ultimate source of their supply. Whales are still victims of our industrialisation, our insatiable thirst for growth at the expense of all else – if in not such a direct way as they were in the past.

Recently, visiting the secret storage unit where London’s Natural History Museum stows the thousands of specimens that they are unable – or reluctant – to display in the museum, the curator of vertebrates, Richard Sabin, showed me a nondescript cardboard box in a corner. He suggested I look inside. When I opened it, I found block after block of solid, pure, spermaceti wax, the solidified oil from the sperm whale’s head.

Whales, in boxes – that’s how we saw them. It was for this substance that American and British whaleships travelled to the South Seas. This stuff that, when liquid, lit the streets of London, New York, Berlin and Paris. It made candles and makeup; lubricated the machines of the industrial revolution. So fine is spermaceti oil that Nasa used it in their space mission, as it does not freeze in outer space.

It is the materiality of the whale that haunts me. What it has provided, albeit unwittingly, to allow us to furnish and light our own lives. Even sperm whale excretions – in the form of ambergris – are the most valuable natural substances known to us, still used as a fixative in high-fashion perfumes. Set that usage against what we now know to be cultural animals, deeply bound by family ties. Of course, it is what makes us most alike that ultimately touches us – and which may be the saving of us both. I told Meera Syal, when we met at Radio 4 the other day, that whale society is entirely matriarchal, and in some species, male whales stay with their mothers all their lives. “Ah,” she said, “they’re Indian whales.”

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/30/plastic-debris-killing-sperm-whales

A 13-metre long fishing net and a 70cm piece of plastic from a car were among the debris recently found in stranded sperm whales. (Credit: Jeroen Hoekendijk).
ELUSIVE WHALES SET NEW RECORD FOR
DEPTH AND LENGTH OF DIVES AMONG
MAMMALS

By Jane J. Lee

Mar. 26, 2016 — A new long-term study looking at the elusive Cuvier’s beaked whale reveals the deepest and longest dives ever seen among mammals.

The new records indicate behavior that is much more varied and extreme than scientists expected for this species, says Simone Baumann-Pickering, a marine mammal biologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. One exceptional whale dove to 9,816 feet (2,992 meters), while a second stayed down for 138 minutes.

Scientists and the U.S. Navy are especially interested in these whales because sonar activity has stranded individuals on beaches in the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands, and the Bahamas, says Greg Schorr, a research biologist with the Cascadia Research Collective in Olympia, Washington.

So far, no such strandings have occurred in southern California—the site of a Navy sonar testing area—he adds.

The new study, conducted in that testing area and published today in the journal PLOS ONE, is the first long-term look at the diving behavior of these animals.

Out to Sea

Studying beaked whales is notoriously difficult, says Randall Davis, a marine mammal biologist at Texas A&M University in Galveston. They spend much of their time at depth far from shore, and they don’t approach boats to ride the bow wave like dolphins do.

Some beaked whale species are known only from specimens that have washed up on shore, adds study co-author Schorr.

Cuvier’s beaked whales may be the most well known of this mysterious group of marine mammals, says Davis, who was not involved in the study. Even so, researchers are just now getting a clearer picture of how these animals spend their days.

Schorr and his colleagues attached tracking tags to eight Cuvier’s beaked whales off San Nicholas Island in southern California and followed them for several months as the animals dove in search of food.

The scientists weren’t expecting to see any of the whales dive to nearly 10,000 feet (about 3,000 meters). Schorr was so surprised at first that he thought the tag was malfunctioning. He tested an identical tag in a pressure chamber to make sure it could report correctly at such depths.

Champion Divers

It’s a "spectacular" maximum dive depth, says Texas A&M’s Davis. But going to such extremes in search of food—most likely deep-sea squid—must be worth the time and energy, he says. Otherwise the animals wouldn’t do it.

Diving to depth can cause all kinds of problems, he says, including the collapse of air-filled spaces within the body, such as lungs. There’s also the potential for a condition called high-pressure nervous syndrome, which can trigger convulsions.

Yet somehow marine mammals like Cuvier's beaked whales are able to dive repeatedly to thousands of feet without any apparent ill effects.

Marine mammals have rib cages that can fold down, collapsing the lungs and reducing air pockets, explains Davis. But exactly how Cuvier’s beaked whales manage to avoid high-pressure nervous syndrome is still unknown.

That’s one of many mysteries researchers would like to solve in the coming years, although Schorr and other researchers first want to concentrate on obtaining basic behavioral data.

Schorr is currently studying whether Cuvier’s beaked whales display adverse or unusual behavior in response to sonar in southern California. "That’s an advantage to these long-term studies," he says. "We can look at how long any impacts last and how long it takes [the whales] to get back to normal behavior."

NOAA DECISION PROTECTS PACIFIC FORAGE FISH

By Paul Shively

Apr. 4, 2016 — It’s safe to say that Joni Mitchell wasn’t thinking about forage fish when she wrote the lyric “You don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.” But that refrain, from her 1970 hit song, “Big Yellow Taxi,” perfectly captures the need for policies to protect small baitfish.

Sardines and anchovies are great examples of forage fish whose critical roles in the ocean food web are rarely noticed until their numbers plummet. Both of those species’ populations appear to be at critically low levels on the West Coast, and the Pacific marine ecosystem is suffering the consequences. Starving sea lion pups and brown pelican breeding failures are two visible examples.

The poor state of Pacific sardines and anchovies highlights the need for fishery managers to do all they can to conserve those and other species of forage fish. Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) took a big step in that direction by finalizing a rule prohibiting commercial fishing from starting on seven broad groups of prey species until fishery managers assess how that fishing would affect the broader ecosystem. This officially enacts a policy adopted unanimously in 2015 by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, which manages fishing in federal waters three to 200 miles off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington.

NOAA Fisheries deserves praise for this landmark decision, which shows that the agency recognizes that a healthy ocean depends on maintenance of an abundant and diverse array of forage fish species.

Chances are you’ve never heard of saury or sand lance, yet these and dozens of other species of little fish are a big deal for ocean health. Depending on the time of year and the place where they are measured, the newly protected forage fish species can be an enormously important food source for seabirds, marine mammals, and fish such as tuna and salmon. For example, one large category of deep-dwelling forage fish, called mesopelagics, makes up a source of biomass so large that the U.S. military once considered hiding its submarines beneath the vast layers of fish.

By one measure, the unmanaged forage fish species protected today account for more than half of the total number of prey species caught in research trawls off the West Coast between 2010 and 2013.

NOAA’s decision culminates five years of study and public participation, including tens of thousands of comments sent to decision-makers. The proposal earned support from a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including recreational and commercial fishermen and organizations advocating for conservation, ecotourism businesses, and restaurants. In fact, fishery managers have described the broad base of support on this issue as unprecedented.

There is more work to be done in protecting our nation’s forage fish. Here on the West Coast, policymakers in California and Oregon can use this decision as a road map for protecting forage fish in state-managed marine waters. Fishery managers in the East are also looking to the landmark decision as an example of precautionary management that could be applied to currently unmanaged forage fish species along the mid-Atlantic coast.

Fishermen, scientists, and ocean advocates all understand that little fish are a big deal for ocean health and that it’s best to know what you’ve got—and protect it—before it’s gone.


SIGHTINGS

Sightings are compiled by Monterey Bay Whale Watch. For complete listing and updates see http://www.montereybaywhalewatch.com/slstcurr.htm

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A rhinoceros auklet off the coast of Washington state holds a beak full of sand lance, one of the species of forage fish protected by a new federal rule announced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Fisheries Service. (Credit: Andrew Reding.)

American Cetacean Society – Monterey Bay

www.acsmb.org
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**April 2016**

| 3/23 8:30 am | 3 | Gray Whales | 350 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/22 10 am | 3 | Humpback Whales | 150 | Olive-Ridley Turtle |
| 3/22 8:30 am | 3 | Gray Whales | 1 | Humpback Whale |
| 3/20 1:30 pm | 4 | Humpback Whales | 50 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/20 noon | 5 | Humpback Whales | 1 | Black-footed Albatross |
| 3/20 10 am | 1 | Gray Whale | 60 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/20 8:30 am | 5 | Gray Whales | 1 | Black-footed Albatross |
| 3/19 1:30 pm | 7 | Gray Whales | 200 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/19 noon | 3 | Gray Whales | 150 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/19 10 am | 1 | Gray Whale | 14 | Humpback Whales |
| 3/18 8:30 am | 6 | Humpback Whales | 75 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/16 1:30 pm | 3 | Gray Whales | 300 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/16 8:30 am | 11 | Gray Whales | 1 | Black-footed Albatross |
| 3/15 1:30 pm | 4 | Gray Whales | 3 | Humpback Whales |
| 3/15 10 am | 9 | Gray Whales | 2 | Humpback Whales |
| 3/15 8:30 am | 7 | Gray Whales | 600 | Long-beaked Common Dolphins |
| 3/14 10 am | 1 | Gray Whale | 6 | Humpback Whales |

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American Cetacean Society – Monterey Bay  www.acsmb.org
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Chapter#24

Membership/Subscription Type:  New ___  Gift ___  Renewal ___

Name _____________________________________________________________

Address___________________________________Email___________________

City, State, Zip_____________________________________________________

Membership Level __________________________________________________

Membership Levels and Annual Dues

- Lifetime $1000
- Patron $500
- Contributing $250
- Supporting $85
- International $55
- Family $55
- Individual $45
- Student $35
- Senior (62 plus) $35

Subscription only * $15/11 issues (*not entitled to membership benefits)

Check___  Mastercard___  Visa___  Expiration date____________

Signature_________________________________

Make checks payable to: ACS/Monterey Bay Chapter
Return to: Membership Secretary, ACS Monterey Bay Chapter
P.O. Box H E Pacific Grove, CA 93950

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