

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER
OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2003

Chapter Meetings...

October meeting to feature audio and visual presentation on the River Dolphins of India and Bangladesh by Joe Olson—see back cover for details.

Once a month (except July-Sept) we get together for a couple hours to learn a little more about whales. We 'talk story', share information, conduct a few minutes of chapter business, listen to an interesting speaker, and have the opportunity to interact and ask questions.

Meetings are always on the third Wednesday of the month and are held just north of the Woodland Park Zoo at:

The Phinney Neighborhood Center
Room 6 (upstairs)
6532 Phinney Ave., N., Seattle

Plenty of free parking is available in the upper and lower parking lots.

Our first meeting of the fall will be in a little over a month: Wed. **October 15th.**

Gathering starts at 7:00pm
Program begins at 7:30pm
Admission is **Free!** — **Please Join Us**

Ballots...

It's time to elect chapter officers and board members. Please return the enclosed ballot before Sat. Sept 20th.

Also in this Issue...

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**ACS/PS to Sponsor
the Vashon Hydrophone Project for
Puget Sound Orca Research**

By Ann Stateler

ACS/PS is excited to announce our sponsorship of the Vashon Hydrophone Project for Puget Sound orca research. The Vashon Hydrophone Project is inspired by other acoustic research projects like Paul Spong's OrcaLab on Hanson Island, BC, and the Whale Museum's SeaSound Remote Sensing Network on San Juan Island.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has designated our local orcas, the Southern Residents, as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. ACS/PS is committed to actively participating with NMFS in recovering this vulnerable population. As part of conservation and recovery planning for the Southern Residents, NMFS and other orca researchers are seeking more information about the Southern Residents' winter distribution, travel, and feeding behavior.

When traveling to and from central and southern Puget Sound, the Southern Residents use both sides of Vashon Island. Independent orca researchers and The Whale Museum's Whale Hotline have documented these Vashon-area sightings for more than two decades. When the orcas come to Puget Sound in fall and winter, they often visit Vashon after dark.

(Continued on page 4)

2003 Orca Sing Retrospective

by Steve Olson

ACS/PS co-sponsored this year's Orca Sing. It was the 5th annual sing and took place on San Juan Island at Lime Kiln Point State Park. This year's Orca Sing, as with the Orca Sings in the past, was timed to coincide with the summer solstice. The day started with a visual check of the site where Fred West's City Cantabile Choir would be performing. Fred West is also a board member of ACS/PS and the choir performs other concerts during the year. During the afternoon check, all three Southern Resident pods, J, K and L, also known as a super pod when seen together, swam past the point going south.

(Continued on page 3)



Research Grant Report

by Stephanie Norman

This year our chapter will be awarding 2 research grants. One grant will be limited to river dolphin research in South Asia and the other will be open to research of any cetacean species within waters of the Pacific Northwest. The request for proposals is currently advertised on our chapter's website and was published on MARMAM which is a marine mammal listserv. Please visit our website for further details: (<http://www.acspugetsound.org>).

Congratulations to our Conservation Chair!

Elizabeth Petras, ACS/PS Conservation Chair and former vice president, just earned her Masters of Marine Affairs from the University of Washington. Her work in graduate school was wide ranging, including research on fisheries by-catch, climate change and salmon resources. Her thesis work was on killer whale and Steller sea lion management issues, based upon her work for the NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center. Elizabeth is busy looking for a job in marine resource management. She just returned from trips to California and Washington DC, on job interviews. Although we would hate to lose you, we wish you the best of luck, Elizabeth.

Ganges and Indus River Dolphins

*excerpts from the National Audubon Society's
Guide to Marine Mammals of the World, Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 2002*

The Ganges and Indus River Dolphins inhabit several large river systems of the Indian subcontinent. They are among the most endangered cetaceans in the world and among the most intriguing. They are functionally blind. Underwater vision is useless in most of their extremely turbid habitat. Although they must surface in the normal manner, with the blowhole uppermost, they swim mostly on their side, nodding their head and sweeping the water column with an almost constant barrage of echolocation clicks.

Very little is known about the social organization of these river dolphins. They frequently appear to be solitary; however, loosely associated groups of a few dozen are occasionally seen. These dolphins are almost always active, which is not surprising, given their constantly moving environment. When surfacing, they sometimes leap clear of the water, and their long beak is often visible as they roll for a breath. Dives average between 30 and 90 seconds in length but can last for several minutes. Reproductive parameters of these dolphins are highly uncertain, and estimates scattered throughout the literature should be regarded with skepticism.

INTERESTED? JOE OLSON JUST RETURNED WITH AUDIO AND VIDEO WHICH HE'LL SHARE AT THE **OCT 15TH** GENERAL MTG.

Whulj

"the saltwater that we know"

The Newsletter of
the Puget Sound Chapter
of the American Cetacean Society



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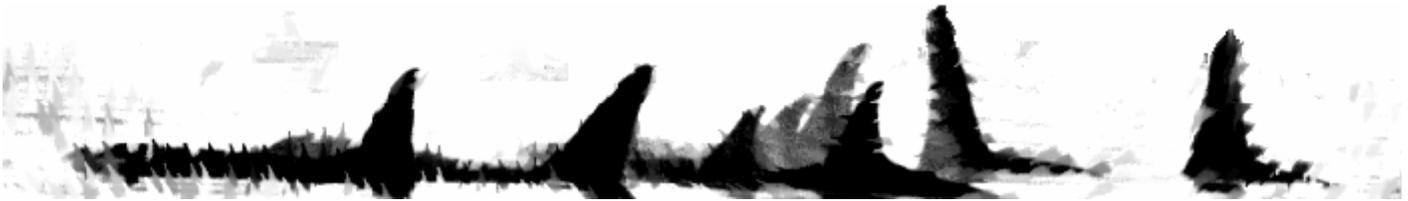
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CASSIS project postponed

This is a local "issue to watch". Originally scheduled to start on August 27th, 2003, the CASCADIA collaborative SeISMic experiment (CASSIS) research project has been postponed until next year. It is even possible that it may be cancelled. The decision as to whether and possibly when to hold it could come as early as September (2003).

The purpose of the project is to gather information about the structure and movements of the earth in the vicinity of Vancouver Island. Japanese and Canadian interests are focused on a detailed comparison of the structures and mechanics of the Cascadia subduction zone with a similar Nankai subduction zone of southwest Japan. See <http://geosun1.seos.uvic.ca/cassis/intro.html> for a description of the project.

The postponement is at least partly due to public concern, from a wide range of interests including both fishermen and conservation activists. This is a joint venture between Japan and Canada. The U.S. has no jurisdiction in the area proposed for the site of the survey. Other seismic tests have taken place in this area in the past, however none of them have occurred during the time of the year that the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) frequent the area.

The proposed \$2-million study employs both underwater explosions (air guns) and land-based detonations (dynamite) to get the geologist's equivalent of an x-ray image. At least 100 land and 80 underwater seismometers are to be set upon a 45,000 square kilometer grid. One question that they hope to answer is whether the massive fault which exists in that area is locked (which would warn of a much vaster release of energy when it eventually slips). The results may also indicate whether the energy might focus on Vancouver or Seattle. Some marine biologists are concerned by low frequency noise from the experiment. Based on past incidences around the world, there is great concern that this noise will injure the sensitive echolocation organs of whales that use sound waves to navigate, communicate and locate prey. In October 2002, a U.S. federal court judge ordered American scientists to stop using air guns in a similar seismic research project in the Gulf of California after two rare beaked whales died. That ban is still in effect.

It's not just orcas that are of concern. Other species besides the orcas that congregate in those nutrient-rich waters include Pacific white-sided dolphins, Minke whales and a group of 250 grey whales that summer off Vancouver. Marine biologist John Calambokidis, of Olympia, Wash., says his research shows that from 300 to 500 humpback whales will be feeding in the area off Vancouver Island just when seismic blasts are planned. Calambokidis also says sperm whales and beaked whales may also be present in the little-studied deeps just beyond the continental shelf. Seismic tests are to take place there, too. For more information see: <http://www.acsonline.org/issues/ConservationRpts/Conservation0307.html#seismic>

Shoup Follow-up

On 5 May 2003, the US Navy Guided Missile Destroyer "Shoup" DDG 86 conducted sonar operations for five hours in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and in Haro Strait between Washington State and Vancouver Island, creating one of the most obvious displays of marine mammal harassment that experienced observers have ever seen, anywhere. For a description of the event, see the following page on the Center for Whale Research's web site: <http://www.whaleresearch.com/thecenter/usnavysonar.html>. You may also see the May issue of *Whulj*.

Necropsies are being performed on several of the dead harbor porpoises which washed up on the shores of the sound in the Shoup's wake to attempt to determine if their death is related to seasonal population fluctuations or to the effect of the mid-range sonar. Although we have some concerns about the closed-door policy regarding the necropsies, we look forward to reporting the results in the near future. For more info., come to a chapter meeting.

MMPA follow-up

As of this writing, U.S. Senate and House committees are still considering modifications to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In our opinion, none of the proposed changes are positive, nor are they necessary. For background information on the MMPA, see the following page on the Humane Society of the U.S.'s (HSUS) website: <http://www.hsus.org/ace/11742>. When the bills come out of committee, Action Alerts will probably be posted on both the HSUS and the ACS national web site (<http://www.acsonline.org>), as well as almost every other conservation group concerned with the MMPA and the Migratory Bird Act and a host of other important pieces of legislation.

2003 Orca Sing : an evening of Song and Whales...

(Continued from page 1)

It was very exciting to see the whales in such large numbers and a few came within 20 yards of the shore. There were several ooh's and ahh's from the crowd that was hoping to witness such an event. In the evening when the choir was doing their sound check and the crowd was settling, in a few whales were spotted in the distance heading north towards the event. Then the choir broke into an impromptu drumming and singing bit. The whales swam past the point and circled around and started enjoying the show. There was breaching and spy hopping and with the aid of a hydrophone underwater and a speaker on the ground, you could hear a lot of vocalization seeming to be in time with the singing. The choir eventually started their program and after some time the whales went on their way. When the concert was over a beautiful sunset was showing, which was apropos for a beautiful evening of song and whales.



Vashon Hydrophone : to detect orcas in the dark...

(Continued from page 1)

Hydrophones can help us determine which pods are present and what they are doing in our waters, even at night! Hydrophones, or underwater microphones, are non-invasive, passive listening devices. They are valuable tools for Puget Sound orca research. Researchers can identify orca pods by how they sound. Recording the orcas' calls and other vocalizations can supplement local sighting data.

Hydrophones can provide continuous acoustic monitoring of a target area. They can help us to find out if the Southern Residents are subjected to harmful underwater noise (like low or mid-frequency sonar) in central Puget Sound.

Ultimately, we plan to include orca calls and samples of underwater noise collected from Vashon on the ACS/PS web site (<http://www.acspugetsound.org>), and to feature Vashon hydrophone data in school presentations, community lectures, and other events.

ACS/PS Board Members Ann Stateler and Joe Olson are setting up the project. Ann is a Vashon resident, marine naturalist, and former Whale Museum intern. She has studied orcas for twelve years. Since 1994 she has collaborated with independent researcher Mark Sears to document orca travel and behavior in Vashon waters. Joe is our Technology Chair and Past President. He owns Cetacean Research Technology and will provide expertise in hydrophones and acoustics for the project.

Fundraising Launched for Vashon Hydrophone

We commenced fundraising for the project, to enthusiastic response, at the Vashon Island Strawberry Festival in mid-July. We expect initial costs for equipment and installation to be about \$5000.00.

With your generous help, we can achieve our goal to install a hydrophone on Vashon this fall. *Your tax deductible donation to the Vashon Hydrophone Project supports Southern Resident killer whale research, recovery, and conservation.*

For more information about the Vashon Hydrophone Project, please contact Ann or Joe at Vashonorcas@aol.com or Joe@acspugetsound.org.

To contribute to the **Vashon Hydrophone Project**, please make checks payable to:

**ACS/Puget Sound Chapter,
SPECIFY VASHON HP IN MEMO SECTION,**

and mail to:

**ACS/Puget Sound Chapter,
P.O. Box 17136, Seattle, WA 98127-0836.**

Thank You!

Thoughts on Relocating Luna (L98)

by Dr. David Bain

I think there is a general consensus that within the next few years as Luna grows larger and more bored that he will become a hazard to human safety. At that point, he will need to be removed from the wild (put in an aquarium or killed). Until then, he could stay where he is, and management of human behavior is expected to be sufficient to ensure everyone's safety (although there have been recent events that raise questions about this).

The no intervention option DFO is following at this point seems to be based on the belief that he is able to support himself in the wild. This is likely to be true, although I don't believe it is known how much he is getting in the way of food from people. There has also been concern that the US government is not taking sufficient steps to protect whales from vessel traffic, water pollution, and other hazards, so Luna is safer where he is than if he were to be returned to US waters.

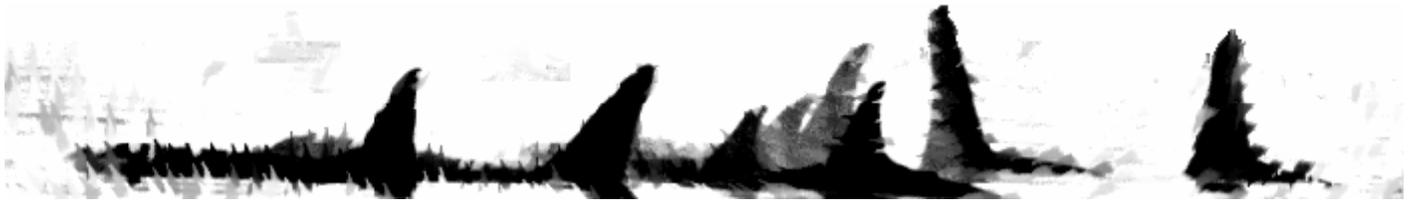
The problem with DFO's approach is that Luna will never return to the Southern Resident community. He represents ap-

proximately 3% of the male population of that community. There is divided opinion over whether this represents a significant fraction of the population, but I think he's important.

Given the amount of close contact he has had with people and pets, I believe temporary holding for medical testing would be important prior to reintroduction.

He is likely to have more trouble than Springer adjusting to being a whale instead of "a boat." As a result, I'd suggest waiting until after Labor Day for a reintroduction attempt. Since L Pod's use of a limited area becomes less predictable later in the year, I wouldn't wait until much beyond that. Vessel traffic in September will be lower than earlier in the summer, and much of the traffic would be commercial whale watchers who could help manage the situation. While I refer to this as waiting, early September is probably as fast as an intervention could be planned and carried out if medical testing is thoroughly done as I have suggested.

(Continued on page 5)



Update on L98, Luna

by Elizabeth Petras

ACS/PS continues to monitor the unusual situation of L98, Luna, a nearly four year old male killer whale from the southern resident killer whale community who has been in living alone in a bay on northwestern Vancouver Island since 2001.

L98 was born to L67, Splash, in September, 1999. He returned to the San Juan Islands with his family in the summer of 2000, but was missing from his family in 2001. Typically, if a whale is not seen by researchers for an entire summer season, the animal is assumed to have died. Researchers were shocked to learn in late summer of 2001 that L98 was alive and well in Nootka Sound, about 300 miles north of the rest of his family. How and why L98 got to Nootka Sound is a mystery. Nonetheless, the young whale appears healthy and well fed.

Of primary concern to scientists and others is L98's tendency to interact with boats and people. Killer whales are highly social animals and it has been suggested that a lack of typical social interaction with other whales is causing L98 to seek attention from people. Readers from the Washington and British Columbia have likely seen news footage of people petting and playing with L98. There was a recent account of L98 preventing a small boat from landing by continually pushing the boat out of the harbor and tugging on the boat's oars.

The situation with L98 is unprecedented, leaving scientists and government officials in a very difficult situation over whether or not to take any action. Any action that could be taken must be initiated by the Department of Ocean and Fisheries in Canada. At this point, DFO has decided not to intervene and attempt a re-introduction between L98 and his family, the L pod whales currently traveling through the San Juan Islands.

While it may seem reasonable to intervene and attempt a re-introduction similar to that undertaken last year to re-introduce A73 to her natal pod in British Columbia, the two situations are quite different. A73 was orphaned and in poor health and traveling in an area where her family had never been seen, not far from downtown Seattle. In contrast, L98's mother, L67, is still alive and had a second calf, L101, in the fall of 2002.

L98 appears to be in good health, he shows none of the signs of disease or malnutrition seen with A73 and he is in a fairly remote area with seemingly abundant food (judging by his size). Also, L-pod whales have been documented in the waters around northern Vancouver Island. It is hoped that L pod will re-unite with L98 during one of their winter trips.

It can not be denied that given the current low population of killer whales in Washington that each whale is important. ACS/PS will continue to monitor this situation as the merits of intervention are debated among scientists, government officials and environmental groups. We are part of OOF (Orphan Orca Fund), which is standing by to assist if a relocation is attempted. Luna's situation is just so much more complex than Springer's was. This situation should help to remind us all that the effects of an ecosystem in distress can be seen at the top of its food chain. In Washington, the health of the marine ecosystem is reflected in the health of our resident killer whales. Declining fish stocks, the prey of killer whales, and pollution are just two of the possible causes for the dramatic decrease in resident whales. Improving the marine environment that is home for these killer whales will ultimately be the best way of ensuring their survival. It will require a long-term commitment from all of us that are fortunate to share our homes with the whales.

Luna (L98) Relocation Issue Complex—some thoughts by Dave Bain...

(Continued from page 4)

Other than health issues, I have two main concerns about a reintroduction attempt. If it fails, it would probably hasten his placement in captivity. That is, a problem animal in Haro Strait would be less tolerable than one in Nootka Sound, and there would be less hope for reintroduction being a possibility. Second, Luna's mother has a new calf, and returning Luna could put that calf at risk. That is, there's more to lose if things go badly than there was with Springer.

I favor a reintroduction attempt, but it would require more careful monitoring than was carried out with Springer. I also think it is less likely to succeed, given the greater length of time Luna has been gone, and although his mother is still alive, she is likely to focus on her new calf rather than him.

I think the approach used with Springer would be appropriate for Luna: capture, transport to a temporary holding facility for medical evaluation, and then transport to the release site followed shortly by release to the wild.

Wild Bottlenose Dolphins Captured in Solomon Islands

Up to 200 wild bottlenose dolphins have been illegally captured in the nearly bankrupt Solomon Islands and are being held in poor conditions. Report is that they were sold for about \$260 US/ea to an international syndicate which intends to broker them to supply tourist swim-with programs. Due to the international outcry over this violation of multiple laws, incl. CITES, Mexico has agreed to forbid further import. It is not clear what is going to happen to the 27 surviving dolphins Mexico already has. For more info, see the ACS national website: <http://www.acsonline.org/actionalert.html>.

AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY



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address correction requested

SAVE THE DATE!! — Wednesday October 15th, 7-9pm, Phinney Neighborhood Center **River Dolphins of India and Bangladesh**

During March and April of 2003 Joe Olson traveled through India and Bangladesh on a research expedition to record the sounds of the endangered Ganges river dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*). These fascinating animals are effectively blind and live in murky waters where they rely exclusively on sound to experience their world. With an audio and video presentation, Joe will share highlights of his trip through these ancient lands. Be prepared to experience exotic sights and sounds both from the people and the cetaceans of Sub Continent.

Joe Olson is the past President of ACS Puget Sound and currently serves on the chapter board as the chairperson of general meetings and technology. He is the owner of Cetacean Research Technology, a company that manufactures hydrophones and provides acoustic analysis tools for the study of cetaceans and other animals.

YES! — ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY!

Name: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500	Patron
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