

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER  
OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

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SUMMER 2006

**Next Meeting:**

The ACS/PS Speaker Series is on hiatus for the summer— regular monthly Wednesday meetings will resume in October—for more info see [www.acspugetsound.org/speakers/](http://www.acspugetsound.org/speakers/)

Shortly after the last issue of the *Whulj*, we had a bittersweet monthly meeting. We'd like to express a special Thank You to Michael Parfit and to Everyone who attended in March, both in person and in spirit. Some people came from as far as B.C.

Michael shared his beautiful and moving tribute to Tsux'iit/Luna, a handsome and irresistibly cute orca.

Michael's personal account was wonderful and at times quite emotional. His video footage was outstanding.

The last clip showed Luna bathed in a sunset accompanied with music of "Somewhere over the rainbow" by Eva Cassidy.

*Thank You Michael.*

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**Chapter Currents**

*by Uko Gorter, ACS/PS President*

First of all, let me apologize for the tardiness of this newsletter. What would normally be the Spring Issue of the *Whulj* has been delayed well into the summer. It is not laziness on our part, but some last minute information gathering for our upcoming movie and fundraising event.

As with all non-profit organizations, funds eventually dry up and the need to find funding is an ongoing struggle. Many of our valued programs, such as the Research Grant Awards, the Vashon Hydrophone Project, Educational Outreach, and of course our monthly Speaker Series, rely heavily on funding. A fundraiser for our Puget Sound Chapter has been long overdue.

Recently, an opportunity arose through a small film production team from California. Rio Films selected the sleek California sea lion as the topic for its first nature documentary, and has produced a fabulous film.

Often unappreciated and dismissed as pests, this beautiful movie shows this amazing pinniped in completely different light. Rio Films has agreed to premier their documentary for us at the Seattle Aquarium on the weekend of July 22 and 23. Proceeds of these showings and a special screening and reception on Saturday evening will go to the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society and the Seattle Aquarium.

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**California sea lions to make a splash at the Seattle Aquarium**

Please join us for this fascinating movie, *California Sea Lions, an unforgettable encounter*, which also raises funds for ACS/PS.

On Saturday, July 22, 2006 and Sunday, July 23, 2006, there will be 40 minute film showings beginning at 11:30 am, 1:30 pm, and 4 pm in the upstairs classroom space at the Seattle Aquarium.

Also on Saturday, July 22, there will be a special showing at 7:00 pm, followed by a reception and after-hours admittance to the Seattle Aquarium exhibits.

Narrated by "Lord of the Rings" star Sean Astin this breathtaking documentary will inspire affection and

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## Educational Outreach

Educating young and old about the plight of our cetaceans is extremely important and is one of the core missions of the American Cetacean Society. The Puget Sound Chapter continues to increase our efforts to reach our community. Following are some highlights of recent activities:

On March 22, the Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society participated in the Kitsap Water Festival at the Olympic College in Bremerton. Through a short presentation and hands-on activities the children got to learn more about the cetaceans in their "back yard", the Greater Puget Sound. Kids were able to touch baleen and teeth. An extended rope indicating the length of different species of whales and dolphins is always popular. Students had to unfurl the rope through two class rooms and a hallway to reach the length of a blue whale.

ACS/PS was also present with a table at the Penn Cove Water Festival in Coupeville, Whidbey Island, on May 6. This lovely intimate festival is immensely fun. The festival not only highlights water conservation themes, but also Native American heritage through canoe races and crafts.

On May 25, both Peggy Foreman, ACS/PS education chair, and Uko Gorter, ACS/PS president, represented the chapter at the Penny Creek Elementary Science Day in Everett. Students learned all about our Puget Sound's marine mammals through interactive exercises and hands on experiences.

ACS/PS VP Ann Stateler and Odin Lonning did a presentation May 27 at the Point Robinson Low Tide Festival on Vashon-Maury Island. Canoe Journey members from the Muckleshoot, Puyallup, and Snohomish Nations joined them onstage for an exchange of Tlingit and Coast Salish honoring songs for the Southern Residents.

ACS/PS was invited to speak and exhibit at the first "World Ocean Day" event at the Seattle Aquarium, on June 10-11. The theme of this unique event was our "Whales in every Ocean". Darcie Larson and Candice Emmons were on hand to answer questions about our local cetaceans. Uko Gorter, did a presentation on Antarctic whales at the Family Orca Center.

Ann Stateler and Odin Lonning also staffed the ACS/PS table at the Vashon Strawberry Festival on July 8 & 9. Many of their neighbors stopped by to comment on the unusual summer whale sightings in Island waters. Did we see you at any of these events?

## *Whulj* "the saltwater we know"

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



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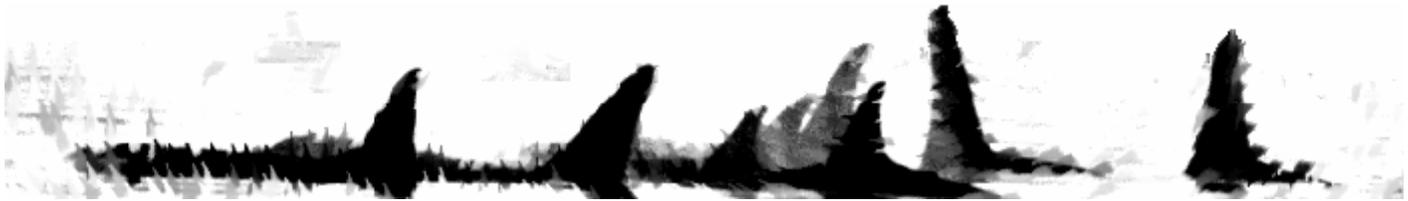
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## Recent Cetacean Strandings in the U.S. Pacific Northwest (2001 – 2005)

by Stephanie Norman, ACS/PS Research Chair

Strandings have been recorded in the U.S. Pacific Northwest (Oregon and Washington) for several decades. The earliest known reports in this region date from the early 1930's when sporadic accounts were recorded. As the shorelines of our region have become more populated and the public has taken more of an interest in marine mammals, the NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) Marine Mammal Stranding Network has received more reports of stranded or beachcast marine mammals than ever before.

The strictest definition of a stranded marine mammal is an animal that is either dead, or if alive, can't return to the water under its own power. Most cetaceans that strand are either dead or too ill to return to the water on their own. Exceptions to this are mass strandings, in which often there are only 1 or a few sick/injured individuals and the rest of the stranded group is healthy, but because of strong social ties they themselves strand and can become too ill to return to the water on their own. There has only been one mass stranding of cetaceans in the Northwest – 41 sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) in Florence, Oregon in 1979.

In the last 5 years, there have been 259 recorded cetacean stranding events in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, comprised of 16 identified species and several unidentified species (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of strandings per year.

Year	Number of strandings
2001	28
2002	39
2003	56
2004	75
2005	61
Total	259

A greater proportion of the strandings took place in Washington (173; 67%) versus Oregon (86; 33%). This is due to the many more kilometers of coastline in Washington (3,767) compared to Oregon (476). Within Washington, more strandings occurred in inland waters (waters east of the western entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca) than along the outer coastline (118 versus 57, respectively).

The stranding network is well developed in the U.S. Pacific Northwest and has been formally in place since 1989; however, there are areas of the coastline that are more remote and harder to access, making stranding response a difficult, if not sometimes impossible, task. Nevertheless, the network has been able to respond to the following list of stranded species from the last five years (Table 2). This list presents just a subset of the many diverse species that have stranded in our waters over the past decades. The most commonly stranded species were the harbor porpoise, the Dall's porpoise, gray whale, and sperm whale.

Table 2. Species stranded in U.S. Pacific NW (2001-2005).

Species	No.
Harbor porpoise	125
Dall's porpoise	49
Gray whale	30
Sperm whale	9
Killer whale	4
Pacific white-sided dolphin	4
Fin whale	4
Striped dolphin	3
Minke whale	2
Stejneger's beaked whale	2
Baird's beaked whale	2
Humpback whale	2
Pygmy sperm whale	2
Northern right whale dolphin	1
Bottlenose dolphin	1
Short-finned pilot whale	1
Unidentified odontocete (whale/dolphin)	8
Unidentified phocoenidae	5
Unidentified dolphin	2
Unidentified beaked whale	1
Unidentified baleen whale	1
Unidentified cetacean	1

Temporally, most strandings seem to occur in the spring and summer months. This pattern appears to be due to at least a couple of factors: the human population along the coastline swells during the summer, increasing opportuni-

(Continued on page 4)



## Recent Cetacean Strandings

*(Continued from page 3)*

ties to discover a stranded marine mammal; and to a lesser degree, marine mammal populations moving closer to the shoreline and in inland waters during these months.

All 259 stranding events consisted of only a singleton animal. Of these, 79 were identified as male, 65 as female, and 115 as unknown sex. The high number of unknown sex animals is due to either decomposition precluding accurate sexing, inexperience of the examiner, or position of the animal (i.e. large whale on its belly).

Stranded marine mammals, while providing data on life history, diseases, reproductive success and anatomy of these creatures, they usually do not serve as an ideal sentinel system for population health as they are not representative of the entire population. They can be sampled for contaminant loads, but with certain caveats. It must be kept in mind that disease and nutritive condition can affect the lipid content of the animal, thus affecting interpretation of the contaminant load. Nonetheless, the stranded animal may also provide information on population movement patterns or residency of a particular species, although the existence of a parent population in the region may not necessarily be reflected by the presence of strandings.

Future participation of the stranding network will continue to further our understanding and insight into the mortality, life history, disease processes, and stock structure of cetaceans living in the U.S. Pacific Northwest.

For all stranded marine mammals (dead or alive) in Washington State: **206-526-6733**, press option 1. For violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (harassment, attempting to feed, move or otherwise disturb a marine mammal), call the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Hotline: **1-800-853-1964**

## VHP QUICKIE: Rare Summer Whale Sightings in Puget Sound

*by Ann Stater, VHP Coordinator*

Transient killer whales visited the Vashon Hydrophone Project (VHP) site in Colvos Pass several times in late June and early July. To put the rarity of these sightings in perspective, VHP associate Mark Sears, a West Seattle native, has not seen orcas in June in Central Puget Sound since 1971. Many thanks to ACS/PS Secretary Candi Emmons and the Center for Whale Research for confirming the IDs on our rare guests: T101, T102, T101a, T101c, and T124c. Some of these Transients visited Vashon in

## Chapter Currents

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Why, you may ask, is the American Cetacean Society getting involved with a sea lion movie? Seals and sea lions, also known as pinnipeds, have adapted similarly to their environment as whales and dolphins (cetaceans), and like cetaceans face many of the same threats. Wonderfully narrated by Hollywood actor Sean Astin (Rudy, Lord of the Rings), this movie is not to be missed!

### California Sea Lions Movie Fundraiser

*(Continued from page 1)*

wonderment for one of the most astonishing creatures to ever evolve. Go up-close and personal into the sea lions' world and get an unprecedented glimpse into their mysterious lives. Question and answer time with the film executive producer Alan De Herrera following each screening. Signed DVDs will also be available.

Seating will be limited. Advance tickets are available by calling 206-386-4330, or online from the Seattle Aquarium web site.

Cost for film showings only (does not include admission into the Aquarium exhibits): \$8 Adults, \$6 Youth 3-12.

Cost for Special Screening and Reception on Saturday night at 7pm, with door prizes, and after-hours admittance into Aquarium exhibits: \$20 Adults, \$10 Youth 3-12

Proceeds will benefit the Seattle Aquarium and the American Cetacean Society/Puget Sound Chapter. Funds will be used for (in alphabetical order) Educational Outreach, Research Grants, Speaker Series, and the Vashon Hydrophone Project. For more info, see the enclosed flyer or any of the following websites: [www.seattleaquarium.com](http://www.seattleaquarium.com), [www.acspugetsound.org](http://www.acspugetsound.org), [www.riofilms.com](http://www.riofilms.com), [www.sealionsmovie.com](http://www.sealionsmovie.com)

February. The VHP also received many belated but reliable reports of two humpback whales, possibly mother and calf, gingerly negotiating crab pot lines near Quartermaster Harbor and foraging in Colvos Pass during the long Fourth of July weekend. We heard loud blows and caught a glimpse of a juvenile whale's tail flukes late in the evening of July 2, but the elusive whale (or whales) disappeared and we have not seen or heard any humpbacks near the VHP site since.



## ORCA SING 2006 A Choral Requiem for Tsux'it (Luna), 1999 - 2006

by Ann Stateler, ACS/PS Vice President

On June 17, Tsux'it/Luna (L98) was in the hearts and minds of everyone who attended the evening Orca Sing concert at Lime Kiln State Park on San Juan Island. This year's *Requiem for Tsux'it (Luna)* was transcendent, and a testament to the young *kakawin's* (killer whale's) radiant character that hundreds of people gathered in his memory.

The choral program featured beautiful music from Africa, Europe, Ecuador, and original compositions by the City Cantabile Choir, directed by Fred West. Odin and I spoke a few words and sang a Tlingit song to honor Tsux'it and his relatives. Words cannot adequately describe how we felt when we saw a whale breach and knew that orcas were approaching as we sang. Ruffles (J1) soon appeared, leading a graceful procession of J Pod by the park.

Joe Olson hooked up a speaker so we could listen for calls on the hydrophone array at Lime Kiln during the concert.

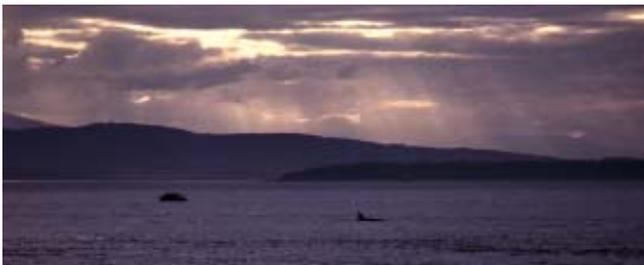
We heard orcas vocalize, commenting favorably on the music, we hope. It seems the concert resonated with the killer whales. Somewhere Tsux'it was smiling at this lovely tribute.

Earlier in the day, The Whale Museum hosted a Summer Solstice Orca Symposium, also honoring the memory of Tsux'it/Luna. The morning session featured informative presentations by Bob Otis, Dave Bain, Kelly Balcomb-Bartok, and Rich Osborne. The illuminating and poignant afternoon session was dedicated to Luna, with presentations by Astrid van Ginneken, Kari Koski, and Suzanne Chisholm.

Orca Sing is sponsored by ACS/PS, City Cantabile Choir, Friends of the San Juans, People for Puget Sound, and The Whale Museum. We are also thankful for support from the San Juan County Parks Department.



Photos courtesy Joe Olson and Bonnie Gretz. For larger, clearer copies (in color with captions), see the chapter web site in a few weeks ([www.acspugetsound.org](http://www.acspugetsound.org))



Suzanne Grant, Fred West, Ann Stateler, Odin Lonning

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**SAVE THE DATE—Saturday July 22, 2006**

Please join us at the Seattle Aquarium at 7 pm for a special showing of *“California Sea Lions, an unforgettable encounter”* by Rio Films, followed by a reception with fabulous door prizes and after-hours access to the Aquarium exhibits. Cost is \$20 for adults and \$10 for youths 3-12. See inside for more details. Seating is Limited. Tickets can be purchased by calling 206-386-4330, or online from the Seattle Aquarium web site.

***PLEASE JOIN US — SAY “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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