

NEWSLETTER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER  
OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 4

FALL 2008

**Next Meeting: Wed. Nov. 19th**  
Please join us in welcoming **Dawn Noren** of the NW Fisheries Science Center. The focus of Dawn's presentation will be on using behavioral data to gain insight into habitat use and bioenergetics of Southern Resident killer whales. For more info. see: <http://www.acspugetsound.org/speakers/>

## Special Seattle Lectures on Ganges River Dolphin Conservation

Without a doubt, most of you are aware of the 2006 listing of the Baiji, or the Yangtze river dolphin, as "functionally extinct". Meaning, that even with a possible few individuals surviving, the species has no chance to recover and is lost forever.

This disturbing news highlighted again the plight of dolphins and porpoises that make their home in rivers and coastal areas. Human development, over-fishing, hydroelectric dams, and pollution all have an immediate impact on these cetacean populations.

## Event Information

All speaker series events meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, Room 6, 6532 Phinney Ave. N., Seattle, (just north of the Woodland Park Zoo).

Doors open at 7pm and the program starts at 7:30pm. Plenty of free parking is available in the upper and lower parking lots. Admission is free—donations to offset the room rental costs are gratefully appreciated of course as we operate on a shoestring like almost all nonprofits.

Together with Cetacean Research Technology ([www.cetaceanresearch.com](http://www.cetaceanresearch.com)), ACS/PS will co-host the Seattle visit and lectures by Dr. Sunil K. Choudhary, of the Vikramshila Biodiversity Research and Education Center, Bhagalpur, India.

In the lectures titled, "**Conservation and bio-monitoring in Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, India, with focus on endangered Ganges river dolphins *Platanista gangetica gangetica***", Dr Choudhary will give an overview of conservation efforts on behalf of this river dolphin species, as well as the delicate balancing act between wildlife and the lives of people sharing their world. Educational outreach and community awareness are important components of Dr. Choudhary's work.

Sharing conservation ideas and learning from others is the main focus of Dr. Choudhary's visit to the United States. As such, his visits to the Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida, and Texas A&M will be of mutual benefit to all.

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Three lectures have been scheduled in December at different venues throughout Seattle. The first lecture will be held at the Seattle Aquarium on December 4 (12-1pm), the second at the University of Washington on December 8 (3-4pm), and the last one at the National Marine Mammal Laboratory on December 10 (noon-1pm). All of these lectures will be open to the general public, and we are currently working with the various facility coordinators to finalize the logistics of securing free public access. We will let our members know as soon as these details have been worked out. Please email me ([uko@ukogortter.com](mailto:uko@ukogortter.com)) and check our website regularly if you are interested in attending any of these lectures.



## “They’re Not Saved Yet” Reasons to Support ACS/PS

As we write this, our country has just voted for a new direction -- one of hope and a brighter future of environmental responsibility. The problems we face as a nation and a global community are daunting.

The dire economy has a direct effect on conservation organizations such as ours. Now, more than ever, we depend on your donations to strengthen our efforts to protect the habitats of the world’s whales, dolphins, and porpoises.

The Puget Sound Chapter of the American Cetacean Society needs your help. As an all-volunteer organization, *100% of your donations fund our programs.* Below are a few compelling reasons to support ACS/PS:

- ACS/PS is the only local whale conservation group that awards **research grants** to graduate and undergraduate students.
- ACS/PS sponsors the **Vashon Hydrophone Project (VHP)**. We installed the first hydrophone dedicated to Southern Resident Killer Whale recovery in lower Puget Sound. Your donations will help us to expand the VHP on Vashon-Maury Island.
- ACS/PS seeks to increase our **educational outreach** to schools and at marine conservation events.
- ACS/PS offers a free monthly **Speaker Series** featuring eminent cetacean researchers, scientists, educators, authors, and artists.
- Through ACS National, ACS/PS is the only local whale conservation organization with **representation** at the annual **International Whaling Commission (IWC)** meeting.
- ACS maintains a comprehensive **website** ([www.acsonline.org](http://www.acsonline.org)) featuring Cetacean Fact Sheets and a first-rate cetacean curriculum.

We hope we can count on your contribution, and look forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings. Please mail donations to:

American Cetacean Society/Puget Sound Chapter  
P.O. Box 2341  
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*Whulj*  
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of the American Cetacean Society



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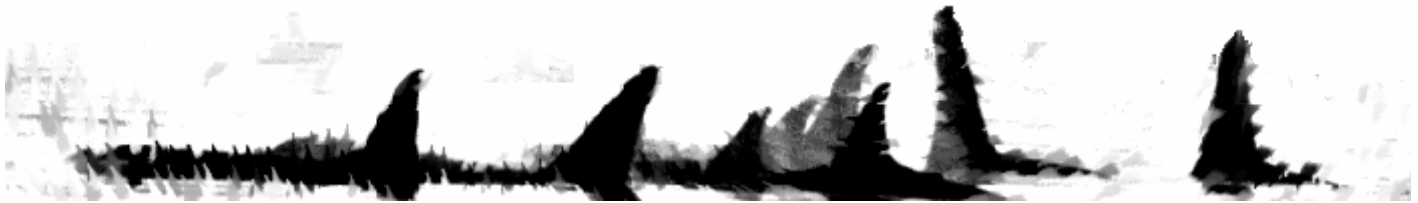
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## Endangered Southern Residents Lose Seven More

by Monika Wieland

The Southern Resident Community of killer whales has lived through a lot over the last century. These orcas were used for military target practice and shot at by fisherman in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, they were subject to the live capture era where more than 40 animals were removed for marine parks, and many more died in the capture process. In recent years they have dealt with unprecedented levels of toxins in the water, salmon run declines, and increased whale watch boater traffic. Finally, in 2005, they received some federal protection through an endangered listing under the Endangered Species Act. However, their struggle is far from over.

The Southern Residents consist of J-, K-, and L-Pods, and since the same family groups of whales return to the inland waters of Washington State and British Columbia every year, it is possible to census the whole population every season. Individual animals are identified by their distinct dorsal fin shapes and gray saddle patch markings. Each season scientists and whale enthusiasts alike are anxious to see who has returned, who has not survived the winter, and who has come back with a brand new calf. All orcas receive an alphanumeric designation to indicate which pod they belong to and the order they were identified, and all are named after they survive a year.

This spring, it became apparent that young calf J43, born last November, did not survive. The news was not too surprising, since calves have about a 50% mortality rate during their first year of life, even though this was the first calf in J-Pod that has not survived since J29 in 1993. By the time K-Pod returned in early summer, the news was mixed. Everyone was saddened to learn of the passing of K-Pod matriarch K7, also known as Lummi, an elder female estimated to be a remarkable 98 years old. The loss was accompanied, however, with the birth of K42, a calf first seen in early June next to mother K14, Lea.

In early summer, L Pod proved hard to evaluate, since most of the whales

in this pod were spending their time out in the open ocean, just making short visits into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the inland waters. By mid-summer, researchers from the Center for Whale Research had a pretty good look at the pod, and determined that 58 year old female L21, named Ankh, had not returned, but in early August a new calf, designated L111, was seen with Ankh's daughter L47, Marina.

In summary, by early August it looked like the residents had lost three whales and gained two new calves, pretty typical numbers for the population that has fluctuated over the last few years, usually settling just under 90 animals in the population. The worst news, however, was yet to come.

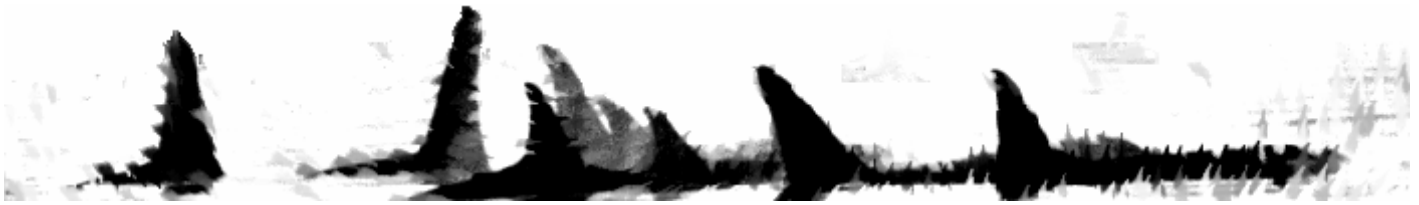
Over the next month, the population lost four more whales. Calf L111 did not survive. Two breeding-age females, J11, Blossom in J-Pod and L67, Splash in L-Pod, went missing. L67's son L101, Aurora, also disappeared.

*(Continued on page 4)*



J27 (Blackberry) and J31 (Tsuchi), two siblings, swim together in Haro Strait in August. Noticeably absent was their mother, J11 Blossom, who had gone missing a few weeks earlier. *Photo courtesy Monika Wieland.*





## Endangered Southern Residents Lose Seven More

*(Continued from page 3)*

The news sent shockwaves through the local whale watching community. Reports were that J11 and L67, during what should be the prime years of their lives at ages 36 and 23, respectively, looked malnourished the last few times they were seen, showing a characteristic “peanut head,” or a depression behind their blowholes which demonstrates that they were using up their blubber reserves.

These losses leave the Southern Resident population at 83, and with seven whales lost is the largest drop in a decade. For a population as small as the Southern Residents, every animal is a critical piece of the puzzle and every loss a blow to their chances at recovery. “This is a disaster,” Center for Whale Research director Ken Balcomb told reporters in October. “The population drop is worse than the stock market.”

It is no secret that Pacific Northwest salmon runs crashed in the latter half of the last century, but so far fishing restrictions and salmon conservation efforts have not resulted in significant rebounds of major salmon runs. While both the Columbia and Fraser Rivers experienced unexpectedly high sockeye salmon runs this summer, the news was not as good for the Chinook salmon, which is the Southern Residents’ favorite and what they feed on almost exclusively during the summer months. Along the Oregon and northern California coasts, the numbers were so bad that there was no commercial salmon fishing season this year.

As the Southern Residents whales head into the fall months, they should ideally be stocked up with fat reserves for the winter months ahead, which they spend mostly out in the open ocean. Instead, scientists expressed concern over the “peanut heads” of several other individuals, and the general feeling among local whale enthusiasts is one of apprehension as we all wonder how well the population will fare this winter.

While an endangered listing for this population was a victory in 2005, it is now unquestionable that more needs to be done. The biggest concern is undoubtedly the number of salmon on which these whales feed. Current conservation measures are not enough, and we have to consider serious efforts, such as a total ban on salmon

fishing, dam removal along rivers, and major habitat restoration efforts at spawning grounds. A glimmer of hope came recently with news that a shift in oceanic currents off Washington and Oregon is bringing down cold water from the Gulf of Alaska, which is providing better ocean conditions for growing adult salmon of all species. Additionally, several Canadian conservation organizations recently banded together to take legal action against the federal government of Canada, demanding that not enough is being done to protect and preserve Southern Resident habitat under the Species at Risk Act, which is similar to the US Endangered Species Act. If this lawsuit is successful, it would put pressure on the United States to take similar action.

Late in October, I had the chance to go out on the water to see K-Pod. Young calf K42, born just this summer, was the focus of our attention, as he was swimming back and forth between his mother and his big brother K26, Lobo. As we watched, this little calf breached dozens of times, doing back flips and belly flops all over the place as the pod slowly traveled on its way. In such a worrisome time for this population, the exuberance of this little calf filled me with a sense of optimism. There is much to be done to help protect the Southern Residents and ensure their recovery, but every time this four-month-old baby jumped out of the water, it was clear that there is still hope for the future.



The youthful exuberance of calf K42 gives us hope for the future. *Photo courtesy Monika Wieland.*

## Cook Inlet Belugas Declared Endangered

by Barbara Bennett

After years of heated debate and strong political opposition, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has officially declared the Cook Inlet beluga whale an endangered species.

The decision is being hailed as a victory for conservation and environmental groups but has been greeted with apprehension by government and industry officials including Alaska's congressional delegation, the mayor of Anchorage and Gov. Sarah Palin, all of whom fear that the listing will stop industry and interfere with human activity in the Cook Inlet. Preliminary findings suggest the most important beluga habitat of all lies closest to Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and home to 40 percent of the state's population as well as the Port of Anchorage which services 80 percent of the state.

There are five populations of beluga in Alaska but the Cook Inlet beluga are considered to be genetically distinct and do not interact with whales in other areas.

NMFS biologists began officially monitoring the Cook Inlet beluga in 1994 after Native hunters and local fishermen began to notice a decline. By 1998 the population had dropped to 347, down from an estimated population of 1,300 animals in 1979. After initially blaming subsistence hunting by Alaska Natives, who took

over 300 whales from 1995-1998, the subsistence harvest was curtailed in 1999. But, instead of rising, the population stagnated and then slightly fell again – about 1.5 percent a year on average from 1999 to 2008. Scientists now believe other factors might be contributing to the continued decline.

In the newly released "Conservation Plan for the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale," federal biologists have identified 18 possible threats to the genetically distinct population, including pollution, industrial activity, coastal development, and seismic testing.

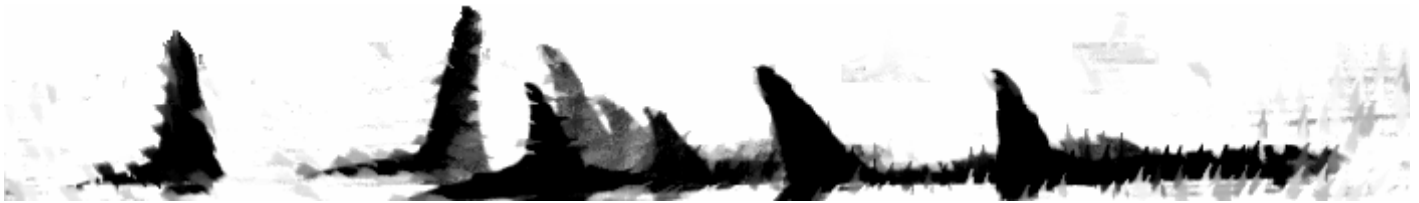
Most affected by the decision will be the proposed \$700 million expansion of the Port of Anchorage which is being enlarged to accommodate additional barge traffic as the city and state population continues to grow. The port also serves as a transfer point for Army Stryker vehicles deploying from the state's military bases. The project, which is one quarter complete, is located in an area where the beluga are known to calve. Noisy pile driving operations at the port, where the city is in the process of filling in about 135 acres of Knik Arm, are known to cause problems for the whales. The expansion could also create geographic limitations could affect the work being done.

*(Continued on page 7)*



Cow and calf beluga whales near Beluga Point in Cook Inlet, Alaska.

*Photo courtesy Barbara Bennett*



Book Review by Uko Gorter

## Beautiful Minds: The Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins

In March of this year, I was fortunate to attend my first European Cetacean Society's conference in my native country of Holland. One of the invited keynote speakers was Jan A.R.A.M. van Hooff, a retired professor of ethology and socio-ecology, specializing in social organizations of primates. His presentation titled, "Intelligence without hands", delved into the intelligence and social behavior of chimpanzees and other great apes as it may be compared to cetaceans, in particular dolphins.

Van Hooff's talk was a truly fascinating look into the parallel lives of these unrelated mammal groups. While their physical appearances differ greatly, their social organization and intelligence show a high degree of similarity. The many marine mammal scientists and students in attendance showed a keen interest in this interdisciplinary presentation, as was evident in the lively discussion that followed.

A fair amount of literature exists that deal with chimpanzee and primate behavior. Some fine examples are the works by Jane Goodall (*The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behavior*) and Frans de Waal (*Chimpanzee Politics*). Similarly, we can find excellent works that highlight the world of bottlenose dolphins and other delphinids. Works by Ken Norris, John E. Reynolds III, Janet Mann, and Stephen Leatherwood, are representative of some of the best.

Finally however, what may well be the first publication to do so, is a work that gives us an insightful portrait of both

the great apes -in particular chimpanzees- and bottlenose dolphins. Titled, "Beautiful Minds: The Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins", the book's authors, Maddelena Bearzi and Craig B. Stanford, paint a dual-portrait of two unlikely mammalian cousins that show an uncanny evolutionary convergence.

Chapters are mostly split as to highlight and compare between the two mammal species. What emerges is a wonderful account of two animal groups that show many similar traits we may recognize in the other great ape: us, humans. Whether these are conciliatory or aggressive behaviors, self-awareness, or political insight, you can't help but look in the mirror.

Well written and immediately accessible to the lay person, this small sized book should peek everyone's interest into animal behavior and explore further. As such, the authors have included a helpful section for further reading.

I strongly recommend *Beautiful Minds* to anyone.

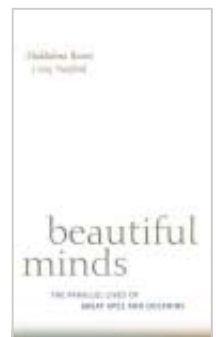
### ***Beautiful Minds: The Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins***

by Maddelena Bearzi and  
Craig B. Stanford

Harvard University Press, 2008

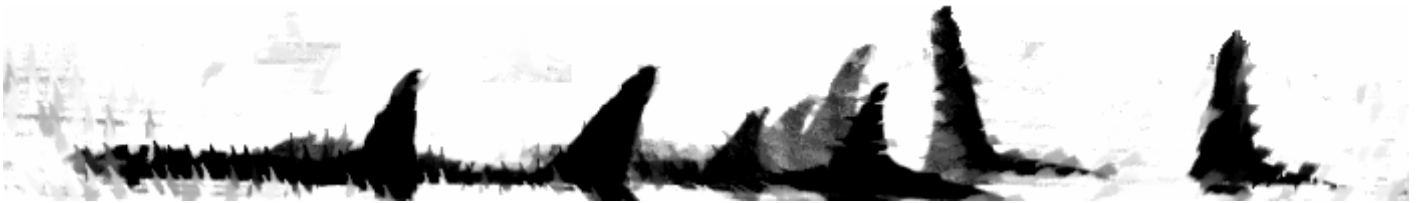
ISBN 978-0674027817

Hardcover \$24.95 (Amazon \$16.47)



Cook Inlet beluga whale. Photo courtesy Barbara Bennett





Book Review by Uko Gorter

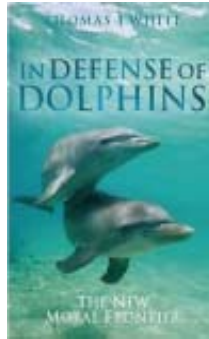
## In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier

On October 15 our ACS/PS chapter was privileged to welcome Dr. Thomas I. White as our guest speaker. Dr. White presented his talk on his most recent book, "In Defense of Dolphins: the new moral frontier". While at that time, I had read more than half way through this eye-opening book, Dr. White's lecture gave me some additional insight into his work.

First things first, this is not some kind of manifesto of a dolphin-hugging animal activist, but a meticulously researched, well reasoned and thoughtfully examined work by a professor and director of the Center for Ethics and Business at Loyola Marymount University, in Los Angeles.

Dr. Thomas White is a philosopher, and while not a marine mammal scientist, is found in good company along with the ancient Greek thinker and pioneer cetologist, Aristotle. Although, one would wonder what Aristotle would have thought of Dr. White's assertion of a dolphin being a "person".

Indeed, this thought-provoking work examines scientific evidence that dolphins, like humans, are self-aware, highly intelligent, lead complex social lives, and capable of emotional feelings, and deserving of basic rights we usually reserve for ourselves.



Are dolphins nonhuman persons? And, if so, shouldn't we treat dolphins in a way that is morally and ethically justifiable? Should we keep dolphins in a captive environment? These are just some of the basic questions that form the basis of this rare work.

The irony of course, is that much of what we learned of dolphin cognition and the social behaviors highlighted in this book, have primarily been gained through research in captivity. Something that Dr. White recognizes, but points out that it may no longer be defensible.

Human relations with dolphins remains inconsistent. Our love of dolphins goes back to ancient mythology; we want to be close to them, touch them, yet we continue to use them for military purposes, captive swim-with programs, and entertainment.

Dr. White gives us a lot to ponder. The inescapable moral dilemma remains.

*In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier*  
By Thomas I. White — Blackwell Publishing, 2007  
Paperback, \$ 23.95 (Amazon \$21.55)  
ISBN 978-1405157797

## Cook Inlet Belugas Declared Endangered

(Continued from page 5)

Another concern is the Anchorage sewer utility which discharges partially treated sewage from the 270,000 residents that live in the area. Currently the city's sewer utility operates under a federal waiver allowing it to use lower treatment standards for wastewater. Because tissue samples from local belugas had much lower levels of contaminants like PCBs and DDT than whales sampled off St. Lawrence Island, and about half the concentrations of whales off Arctic Alaska, the agency will be taking a closer look at beluga tissue for other contaminants like fire retardants and pharmaceuticals. Anchorage mayor, Mark Begich is concerned that upgrading the system could cost hundreds of millions of dollars resulting in higher taxes for local residents.

Other man-made dangers include oil and gas spills and environmental change (such as global warming).

Because population growth is a slow process and other factors like mass strandings (in the past five years 53 belugas have died on the mudflats in the inlet) and predation by orca can further impact the fragile population, every whale counts. Scientists believe that if the Cook Inlet beluga were to disappear, it is highly unlikely they would be replaced by belugas from other areas. As numbers continue to decline, even small losses are significant.

Despite the continuing opposition from political and industrial interests, biologists and conservation groups alike believe that the listing is critical and will have little impact on responsible and sustainable development in the Cook Inlet. NMFS will now have up to a year to decide which parts of the inlet are "critical habitat" for the whales. The decision was published in the Federal Register on October 22, starting a 60-day period before it becomes effective.

# AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY



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## SAVE THE DATE—Wednesday November 19, 2008

Please join us at 7pm at the Phinney Neighborhood Center, Room 6 (just north of Woodland Park Zoo)

Dawn Noren, NW Fisheries Science Center will be our featured guest. Dawn is working on a collaborative study with the Harmful Algal Bloom group at the NWFSC to assess potential impacts to killer whales that consume salmon during a harmful algal bloom



Photo of A73 (Springer) courtesy Mark Sears © 2002 All Rights Reserved

**PLEASE JOIN US — SAY “YES!” — ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY!”**

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