

# THE Blackfish Sounder

NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA WILD KILLER WHALE ADOPTION PROGRAM

## Southern residents: Stirring up debate

See page 3



VALERIE SHORE

The old adage “the more you learn, the more there is to learn” rang particularly true this past year as observation after observation underscored what truly intriguing—and quirky—animals killer whales are. For example, Dr. John Durban and I had the unusual and slightly unsettling experience of being toyed with by transient killer whales in Alaska, as they repeatedly dropped gray whale blubber near us, only to snatch it away whenever we reached for it (page 5). Luna, the lone killer whale calf in Nootka Sound, sought out boats to play with (at substantial risk to all concerned), apparently oblivious to his central role in a controversy that attracted media attention from around the world (page 2). Dr Bob Pitman presented evidence that three distinct forms of killer whales inhabit the Antarctic, all with different prey preferences. B.C.’s offshore killer whales made a good case for a name change by making a total of eight visits to nearshore waters (page 4). And early this year, six transient killer whales from southeast Alaska travelled to Washington state’s Hood Canal to feed on harbour seals (p. 4).

Due to a surge in adoptions and donations last year, I’m pleased to announce two changes to the way we’ll be spending adoption program funds in the coming years. The first is a new scholarship fund that we’ll contribute to annually—see p. 8 for details. The second reflects the type of research we fund. In the past, we focused almost entirely on projects directly involving killer whales. These projects will continue to use the majority of adoption funds, but we’ve decided to broaden our focus to include some of the marine mammals that killer whales interact with—and sometimes prey on—in their marine environment. So, in future years, don’t be surprised if you see the occasional article about white-sided dolphins, minke whales, or even sea otters in the *Blackfish Sounder*.

*Lance Barrett Lennard*

Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard  
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Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre

Visit our website!  
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### INSIDE

2

Springer & Luna news

3

Antarctic whales



5

More Alaska surprises

6

Orca Update

8

Behind the Scenes

The B.C. Wild Killer Whale Adoption Program, hosted by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, is an ongoing research and conservation effort for the protection of wild killer whales and their habitat.



VANCOUVER AQUARIUM  
MARINE SCIENCE CENTRE

**PODPOURRI**

Springer is one of few northern residents with a hooked, or “open,” saddle patch. That’s the gray area behind the dorsal fin, and it can be either solid or open. Saddle patch patterns are one of the best ways to identify individual whales.

CHRIS TULLOCH



Springer

Springer is fat and spunky but small for her age, probably because she was so undernourished in the months after she was orphaned. It’s likely she was still nursing when her mother died.

Springer’s closest relative is grandmother **Kelsey** (A24). She also has an aunt, **Schooner** (A64) and two young aunts or uncles, **Magin** (A71) and **Toba** (A78).

Luna’s immediate family includes his grandmother, L2, uncles L78 and L88, his mother, L67, and a baby brother he’s never met, born in 2002.

Did Luna make acoustic contact with some northern resident killer whales this spring? We’ll never know for sure, but calls recorded on a hydrophone in Nootka Sound have been identified as Luna and what sound like G-clan whales. They and Luna were likely within earshot of one another for a short while, although no one actually saw them. G-clan whales include G1, G12, I11 and I31 pods.

## Springer continues to thrive

**Springer** (A73) the orphaned killer whale calf, is doing just fine, thank you.

In early 2002, Springer showed up alone and in poor health in Washington state’s Puget Sound, far outside her family’s usual range. At the time she was only 18-months-old, the equivalent of a human toddler. Her mother, **Sutlej** (A45), had died sometime in 2001 and she’d become separated from the rest of her family.

Through an international effort involving scientists, veterinarians, animal care specialists and volunteers, Springer was returned to her home waters in Johnstone Strait in July 2002 and was released as relatives swam nearby.

Since then, we’ve been fascinated to watch which whales Springer is travelling with, and whether she’s being accepted as a full-fledged member of her family group.

For the rest of summer 2002 Springer travelled with close relatives—the A4s (her birth pod) and the A5s. They left the area in the fall, as

they usually do. We still don’t know where they go for the winter, but the A4s and A5s usually reappear in the Johnstone Strait area in June or early July.

Right on cue, Springer reappeared in early July 2003, playful, plump and with about 30 other A-clan whales. She spent that summer travelling with several matriline, but her most consistent companions were great-aunt **Yakat** (A11) and cousins **Nahwitti** (A56) and **Skeena** (A13).

She was with the same whales when they returned to Johnstone Strait last year on June 28. To the delight of observers she also spent a lot of time that day sandwiched between the towering fins of the A36 brothers—**Cracraft** (A32), **Plumper** (A37) and **Kaikash** (A46).

And we even have some 2005 news for you. Yakat, Nahwitti and Skeena made a brief, surprise visit to Johnstone Strait on Feb. 20 this year. Take a guess who was with them!

## Luna stays put for now



LANCIE BARRETT/LENAARD

Luna checks out passengers on the MV Uchuck III. For everyone’s safety and the young whale’s well-being, visitors to Nootka Sound are asked to stay away from Luna.

If we were to name a killer whale newsmaker of the year for 2004, **Luna** would win flukes down.

The five-year-old male killer whale from the endangered southern resident population, known to researchers as L98, continues to live alone in Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. He’s been there since he got separated from his mother and pod in July 2001.

In last year’s newsletter we told you that plans were underway to reunite Luna with his pod. Although the youngster was healthy, he had become a danager to himself and people by seeking out boats, docks and floatplanes.

In April 2004 Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) decided to intervene and move Luna to

the waters off southern Vancouver Island—the core area for southern residents in the summer. They selected the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre to lead the whale’s capture, care, transport and release.

The capture operation began in June but was halted within days after protests by the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations. They believe that the whale they call *Tsu-xiit* embodies the spirit of their late chief, and want him left alone until he chooses to leave or naturally reunites with his pod.

Although everyone would prefer a natural reunion, most scientists believe it’s unlikely because Luna is usually too far inside Nootka Sound to hear or be heard by his pod if it was passing by. And L-pod has never been seen that far inside the sound.

After the relocation plan failed, DFO set up a stewardship program with the Mowachaht/Muchalaht in an effort to keep Luna away from boats during the busy summer season. The Mowachaht/Muchalaht have asked DFO for more funding to continue the education and monitoring program this summer.

To get regular updates on Luna’s progress visit [www.reuniteluna.com](http://www.reuniteluna.com).

# Southern residents stir political and scientific debate

Last December the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) finally proposed that southern resident killer whales be listed as “threatened” under the country’s powerful Endangered Species Act.

The move, spurred by a lawsuit from environmental groups, reversed a previous NOAA Fisheries decision that such a listing was “not warranted.” It had instead opted for “depleted” status under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

NOAA Fisheries had hinged its original decision on whether resident populations of killer whales are a separate species, subspecies or “distinct population segment” from other killer whales worldwide. NOAA Fisheries concluded that the southern resident population “did not meet the criterion of biological significance” under the Endangered Species Act.

The problem is that killer whales have historically been considered one species worldwide. No single body is responsible for categorizing species and the scientific community can’t agree on the question.

After NOAA Fisheries was ordered by a federal judge to review its decision, an international workshop was organized in California, last spring to evaluate the current taxonomy of killer whales. Taxonomy is the science that deals with the identification, naming and classification of plants and animals.

Charissa Fung, a graduate student funded in part by the Killer Whale Adoption Program, attended the workshop and presented a paper on her study of killer whale skull structure in resident, transient and offshore killer whales. Workshop participants also considered long-term research by the Vancouver Aquarium’s Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard on the

genetics and population structure of north-east Pacific killer whales.

The workshop concluded that there’s still not enough information to identify more than one worldwide species of killer whale, but that North Pacific resident killer whales are possibly a subspecies. In effect, no major decision was reached, but NOAA Fisheries was given enough ammunition to propose the “threatened” status.

Under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, threatened species are those that “are likely to become endangered throughout all or a significant portion of their range in the foreseeable future. They are populations that have been in decline and unless some type of protection is provided, they will slide downward toward extinction.”

A final decision on the U.S. listing is expected by the end of 2005.



## Dinner is served

The dark blob on the ice floe in the middle of these spyhopping Antarctic killer whales is a Weddell seal having a really bad day. On the left, a leopard seal looks on. Ice floes are no problem for these bold hunters; they’ll flood or tip the floe, or even hurl themselves onto it to get at a tasty seal meal. These are the so-called Type B Antarctic whales.

## Antarctic whales illustrate species dilemma

Are there different species of killer whale in the world?

Dr. Robert Pitman thinks so. He’s a marine biologist from the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in California and he’s identified three distinct forms of killer whale in Antarctica, each differing in physical appearance, behaviour, and preferred habitat.

**Type A** looks like the familiar killer whale seen worldwide. It has a medium-sized eyepatch, lives offshore in ice-free waters and hunts primarily minke whales. It’s found throughout the Southern Ocean.

The other two forms sport what Pitman calls a “dorsal cape,” distinct dark gray shading on the back overlapping the lighter gray saddle patch. Both forms live in pack ice, and have a yellowish cast to their white areas.

But there are differences. **Type B** has a very large eyepatch, almost twice as large as Type A. It is circumpolar, roaming the loose pack ice in scattered groups looking for its preferred prey—seals.

**Type C** has a much smaller, slanted eyepatch and is 1-1.5m shorter than the “regular” Type A killer whale. It’s found primarily in the dense pack ice or open leads off eastern Antarctica and is believed to feed on toothfish.

The three types of Antarctic killer whale don’t mingle and there’s no evidence of intermediate forms, says Pitman, who believes they may qualify as separate species. He took his case to an international workshop on killer whale taxonomy last year (see story above), where the majority



A Type C killer whale plows through the slush ice in Antarctica. Note the darker shading, or dorsal cape, on the back.

agreed that while the evidence is intriguing, it isn’t convincing enough.

The conclusion? More research is needed. For now, the world recognizes only one species of killer whale—*Orcinus orca*.

FIELD NOTES

This winter, **transients usually seen in southeastern Alaska** appeared in Hood Canal, a 90 km long body of water in Puget Sound, just opposite Seattle. The six whales—two females each with two calves—were first seen on January 25 and were still there, feasting on harbour seals, as this issue went to press. In early 2003, a group of 11 transients spent eight weeks in the canal.

In February, **12 killer whales became trapped in pack ice** off the Japanese island of Hokkaido near the Russian border. Nine whales, including three calves, died despite efforts to rescue them. Strong north winds may have unexpectedly shifted the drifting ice. Scientists are trying to determine whether the group belonged to a Russian or Japanese killer whale population. There are few killer whales left in Japanese waters, but more than 150 killer whales have been identified in Russia's far east.

Resident killer whales eat fish, transients eat marine mammals, right? Last November that division didn't seem so clear when the three adult brothers of the resident **A36 matriline** were spotted "playing" with a Dall's porpoise in Johnstone Strait. They chased it, tossed it, balanced it on their heads and kept diving on top of it—exactly what transients often do when setting up a kill. In this case, the brothers eventually lost interest and the battered porpoise swam off.

Eight visits by **offshore killer whales** were documented in 2004, including four encounters in Johnstone Strait in late summer and fall. On one visit, the A30 resident matriline was also in the strait. According to Helena Symonds at nearby OrcaLab, as the visiting offshores chatted up a storm, the A30s grouped up very tightly on the other side of the strait and zig-zagged back and forth until the offshores had passed by.



LANCE BARRETT-LENNARD PHOTOS

## More surprises in western Alaska

In May and June 2004, the Vancouver Aquarium's Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard headed up to False Pass, which is the first connection



between the Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea as you go west along the Alaskan peninsula.

It was the second spring in a row that he'd been to the region, which is one of two field sites in a pioneer study of the killer whales of western Alaska. He's working with Craig Matkin of Alaska's North Gulf Oceanic Society to photograph, record sounds and take tiny biopsy samples from killer whales in the region. When possible, they're also retrieving samples of their prey.

So far they've identified 114 transient killer whales in the False Pass area, most of which have never been documented before. By comparison, they've identified about 50 transients elsewhere in the eastern Aleutians. So far, only six animals are common to both study sites, even though they're only 160 km apart.

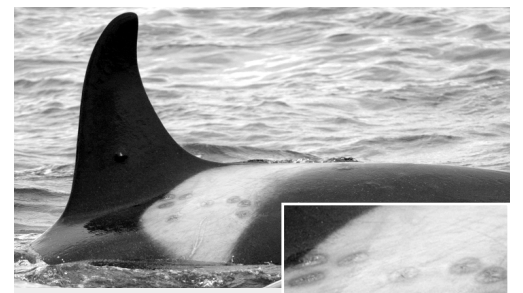
While the eastern Aleutian transients appear to be fur seal specialists (at that time of year, anyway), the False Pass transients feed on gray whales, mainly calves. Although the researchers never witnessed a gray whale kill, an oily sheen on the water surface and whales occasionally surfacing with pieces of flesh in their mouths made it quite clear what was going on.

It's possible that the False Pass whales are a distinct population of transients, says Barrett-Lennard. Most intriguing are the distinctive roundish scars—two centimeters in diameter or smaller—that many of these whales have on their bodies. It suggests they go somewhere unusual or do something different than other killer whales in the area.



Two colleagues with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service have a theory. Drs. John Durban and Robert Pitman think the scars may be caused by cookie cutter sharks, which temporarily latch onto their prey and bite off small chunks of skin and flesh. They're warm water sharks found in the tropics and sub-tropics.

"If this theory is correct, then these transient killer whales are covering a lot of territory and that's pretty neat," says Barrett-Lennard. "It's not something that we've seen before."



The round scars visible on the saddle patch of this whale may have been caused by cookie cutter sharks.



LANCE BARRETT-LENNARD

Mouth agape, a playful transient sneaks up to snatch a piece of gray whale blubber from researchers.

## Killer whale games

Do killer whales have a sense of humour? You be the judge.

Researchers Lance Barrett-Lennard and John Durban were watching four False Pass transients feeding on a gray whale when a piece of blubber about the size of a twin mattress popped up nearby. The whales had moved away, so the researchers motored over to cut off a small sample for genetic analysis.

Wearing rubber gloves and armed with a scalpel in one hand and forceps in the other, Barrett-Lennard leaned over the side of the boat to do his thing. Like the great white shark in the movie *Jaws*, a large male transient burst at the surface next to the boat, grabbed the piece of blubber, and vanished.

"It scared the daylights out of me," says Barrett-Lennard. "I leapt backwards in the boat and just about took out John's eye with my scalpel." Meanwhile, the whale swam about 300 metres away and then let the blubber chunk go.

The researchers waited. The whale seemed to lose interest, and they headed toward the blubber. Again, the whale appeared out of nowhere and carted off the prize.

After seven or eight more attempts, with similar results, the researchers were more amused than anything else. "He was clearly playing with

us," says Barrett-Lennard. "Every time, he'd drop it and we'd see his dorsal fin streaking away from us as if he was leaving. Then he'd double back underwater."

The researchers decided to shoot the blubber with a biopsy dart, which is supposed to take a nick of tissue and bounce off. But it didn't. It stuck in and the transient began carrying the blubber around again, dart and all.

Still laughing, but determined, the researchers rummaged through their gear for a crossbow that shoots larger darts, used for humpback whales. Trouble is, it was in pieces and neither of them had assembled one before.

"Here we were trying to follow instructions as pieces were rolling back and forth on the deck with the swell," he recalls. Half an hour later they had it assembled but it was backwards. As the whales milled about nearby ignoring the blubber, they reassembled it.

On their first approach, the whale took the blubber again. On the next try, they shot the crossbow dart and successfully retrieved their sample. Game over, the whales moved away and the researchers went over and pulled out the original biopsy dart.

"It just shows you how playful these animals can be."

## PODPOURI

**What are resident killer whales eating?** When studying an animal that does most of its dining out of our sight, there's really only one way to find out—scoop up their leftovers. That's what Dr. John Ford and Graeme Ellis from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (along with colleagues such as the Vancouver Aquarium's Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard) have been doing for several summers. They follow the whales as they're foraging and use a fine-meshed net to scoop up fish scales or bits of flesh left floating in the water after a kill. Fish species, even different types of salmon, can be identified by their scales. Until 2004, the researchers had accumulated about 170 samples. They doubled that count last summer, mainly because they're getting better at recognizing the subtle cues that indicate a kill. "We're targeting a particular matriline—a mum and her offspring—and watching them carefully during foraging periods," says Ford. We'll let you know what they're finding out in future issues of the *Blackfish Sounder*.

**The long-term effects of oil pollution** are more significant than previously believed, a recent study has shown. A team led by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill researcher Dr. Charles Peterson, examined the impact of the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill on marine life in Alaska's Prince William Sound. They found that surprisingly large quantities of toxic subsurface oil continue to affect wildlife in the region and will likely do so for decades to come. "These astounding findings have extremely important implications for environmental management and protection," says Peterson. The *Exxon Valdez* spilled 42 million litres of crude oil along almost 2,000 km of pristine Alaskan shoreline.



# New marine contaminants worry scientists



Harbour seal and pup.

VALEERIE SHORE

There's a new contaminant threat emerging in the marine food chain.

It's a class of chemicals known as polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs. First manufactured in the 1980s, PBDEs are used as flame retardants in a wide range of products including furniture, plastics, computers, electronics, carpets, foam insulation and cars.

PBDEs leach into the environment at dumps and manufacturing sites, and from a variety of consumer products. They're similar to PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, in that they accumulate in the fatty tissue of animals and work their way up marine food chains, becoming more concentrated as they go.

Top predators, such as seals and killer whales, end up with the biggest toxic load.

PCBs can disrupt hormonal activities, impair reproduction, cause developmental and skeletal abnormalities, and weaken the immune system. PBDEs may be just as dangerous. Although PCBs were banned in the 1970s by many countries, PBDEs are unregulated in North America.

A 2000 study showed that B.C.'s killer whales are the most PCB-contaminated marine mammals in the world. Dr. Peter Ross, a wildlife toxicologist with the Institute of Ocean Sciences near Victoria, led that study, which analysed tiny blubber samples taken

from B.C. killer whales between 1993 and 1996. He continues to investigate contaminant levels in marine mammals in B.C. and Washington State, and was involved in two recent studies that are sounding the alarm about PBDEs.

One study re-analyses the 1993-96 killer whale samples for PBDEs. It finds that although PBDE levels were low compared to PCBs, there is still cause for concern. "We've seen an exponential increase in PBDEs in the environment over the last 20 years," says Ross. "It's likely that if we sampled those killer whales again today they would be significantly more contaminated."

Another study released this spring shows "surprisingly high" concentrations of PBDEs in food items consumed by harbour seals in the Strait of Georgia and Puget Sound in Washington State. This may not be good news for southern resident killer whales, which use these waters to feed on salmon and other fish.

"As fish-eaters, harbour seals can give us a local, top-of-the-food chain signal of environmental contamination," says Ross. "What they're telling us is that PBDEs are the chemicals we should be watching in the coming years."

## ORCA UPDATE

We're delighted to report that researchers had 21 good reasons to celebrate by the end of the 2004 field season. That's how many new calves were spotted among the 16 pods of the northern resident killer whale community!

Among our adopted whales, there were 10 new arrivals. In the A11 matriline, **Kiltik** (A52) welcomed her second calf, A81. Kiltik's first calf was born in 2002 but died in its first year. Meanwhile, Kiltik's sister **Racey** (A59) became a first-time mom with the arrival of A82.

In the A12 matriline, **Simoom** (A34) added a fifth youngster to her family with the arrival of A80. And in the A8 matriline, **Sonora** (A42) gave birth to her third calf, A79.

In B-pod, matriarch **Scarlett** (B7) became a first-time grandmother with the birth of B16 to her 13-year-old daughter, **Klaskish** (B14). In the C6 matriline, **Lama** (C8) added a fifth calf, C25. And the two-whale D11 matriline doubled in size when matriarch **Christie** (D11) gave birth to D22 and her 14-year-old daughter **Fisher** (D17) welcomed her first-born, D21.



Michael Bigg, the pioneer of killer whale research in B.C., who died in 1990. Until now, researchers hadn't known whether M.B. was a he or a she!

Last but not least, the 10th newcomer is 1105 to **Loquillilla** (I12), her third.



We're also happy to tell you that our two 2003 babies survived their crucial first year and they're ready for you to adopt. **Roller** (A77), named after Roller Bay on Hope Island north of Port Hardy, is **Skagit's**



(A35) fourth calf. **Toba** (A78), named after Toba Inlet on B.C.'s mainland coast across from Campbell River, is **Kelsey's** (A24) eighth known calf. Toba's niece is the famous orphaned

whale, **Springer** (A73).

If you have adopted **Kisameet** (C16) or **Squally** (C18) we have news—they're boys! Kisameet, born in 1989, and younger uncle Squally, born in 1991, are both starting to "sprout," an expression we use to describe the upward growth of a male's dorsal fin as he approaches sexual maturity. By the time they're fully grown their dorsal fins may be as high as 1.8 metres.

Finally, we'd like to correct a mistake in last year's newsletter. Transient T19 was incorrectly identified as **Nootka**. T19's correct name is **Mooyah**, after Mooyah Bay in Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

## Time running out for Alaskan transient group

A group of transient killer whales in Alaska's Prince William Sound that has lost more than half its members in the last 15 years has been designated a "depleted" stock under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act.

In 1988 the AT-1 transient group numbered 22 animals and was one of the mostly commonly sighted groups in the sound during the summer. Then came the disastrous *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989.

Three of the whales were seen swimming through the oil. Within two years of the spill, 11 whales had died, probably from inhaling oil vapours or eating contaminated seals. Another three died between 1999 and 2004. There are now only eight members left in the group.

The AT-1s are unusual in several ways. Although most transient groups range over thousands of kilometres, the AT-1s stay in the waters in and around Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords. They've never been seen mixing with other transient groups. And they're genetically distinct from other transients, which means they don't breed outside their group.

No new calves have been seen in the AT-1s since 1984. The group's future now depends on two breeding age females and two males.

There is evidence that the AT-1s were in trouble before the oil spill. Over the last century, Prince William Sound has been a busy place, with fisheries, canneries, mining activity and sealing.

The AT-1s also have very high contaminant levels. This may be a factor in the lack of calves, since high PCB concentrations have been linked to reproductive failure in other marine mammals. Furthermore, the seal population in the region is declining.

Under the "depleted" designation, NOAA Fisheries is developing a conservation plan outlining future conservation, monitoring and research initiatives for the AT-1s. But everyone agrees it may be too late.

"It's very sad," says the Vancouver Aquarium's Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard, who continues to study the group's genetics in collaboration with Alaskan researchers. "This is a population that is going extinct right in front of our eyes and there's little we can do about it. It proves how vulnerable killer whales are and why we have to do everything we can to ensure that other populations don't get to this point."



An AT-1 whale

## Canadian killer whale recovery team unveils strategy

A federal plan to help B.C.'s resident killer whales began to take shape this spring with the release of a draft recovery strategy.

The strategy is the result of a year of consultations by a 24-member recovery team appointed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). The team is co-chaired by the Vancouver Aquarium's Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard and Marilyn Joyce from DFO.

Between the mid-1990s and 2001, B.C.'s southern and northern resident killer whale populations declined by about 20 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. There are currently 85 southern residents and just over 200 northern residents.

Southern residents are classified by Canada as endangered, or facing imminent extirpation or extinction. The northern residents are considered threatened, or likely to become endan-

gered if limiting factors are not reversed.

Under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), recovery plans must be developed within a specified time frame for any endangered or threatened species. Recovery planning is a two-part process. First, a recovery strategy identifies objectives and broad approaches to respond to known threats. Then an action plan is developed.

This spring, DFO held a series of public information sessions to allow First Nations, environmental groups, stakeholders and the public to comment on the draft recovery strategy.

The 70-page document summarizes the current status of resident killer whales and why they're so vulnerable and details the main threats to their future: low population size and limited growth potential; reduced

prey availability; environmental contaminants; disturbance; and gaps in our knowledge of critical habitat.

The strategy identifies five objectives that directly address these threats: protecting their food supply; reducing chemical and biological pollutants; minimizing disturbance; protecting critical habitat; and more research.

"This action plan will provide government with the impetus it needs to better protect killer whales and their environment," says Barrett-Lennard. "The effect will likely be incremental and it may be decades before we see healthier killer whale populations. But it is an essential step in the right direction."

To view the draft recovery strategy, visit [www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/marinemammals/RKW/recoverystrategy\\_e.htm](http://www-comm.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pages/consultations/marinemammals/RKW/recoverystrategy_e.htm).

### PODPOURI

Prince William Sound and Kenai Fjords are also home to about 360 resident killer whales. Of these, about 200 are in well-known pods that are monitored every year, similar to the ongoing studies in B.C. and Washington state.

## Behind the scenes at the adoption program

In past issues of this newsletter we've profiled a number of individual whale scientists, to give you a sense of the hard work behind the research that you as members help support.

But what about the adoption program itself? Who keeps the program running smoothly while the scientists are out in the field or travelling to conferences? Who is it you talk to when you become a member or renew your adoption?

Meet Judy McVeigh, the adoption program coordinator. She spends most of her days in front of a computer or on the phone, managing the adoption program database, processing memberships and donations, arranging production of the newsletter, book-keeping, filing, and answering questions.

"The adoption program takes a lot of time to do properly," says the Vancouver Aquarium's Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard. "The program coordinator is the glue that holds it together."

McVeigh, a recent graduate in marine biology, is new to the job. She replaces Nancy Marcus who moved back to eastern Canada in December after five years with the adoption program. "It was a really rewarding job and I'll never forget it," says Marcus. She especially enjoyed talking to whale enthusiasts on the phone or at annual trade shows and community festivals.



Nancy Marcus

"I loved to hear people's reasons for adopting a whale, whether it was due to a whale-watching encounter, or because their grandchild wanted to be a marine biologist, or it was a school

class studying whales. Their enthusiasm was very inspiring."



Judy McVeigh

The program coordinator is a key connection between researchers and members, making sure the most up-to-date information from the field goes out in renewal letters and newsletters. Every now and then, there's a chance to go out and see the whales. "Lance took us out the year **Springer** (A73) was released," recalls Marcus. "We didn't see her but had a great encounter with another group. I also gained a very good appreciation of what it's like to try and photo-identify moving targets while trying to keep your balance and drive the boat at the same time!"

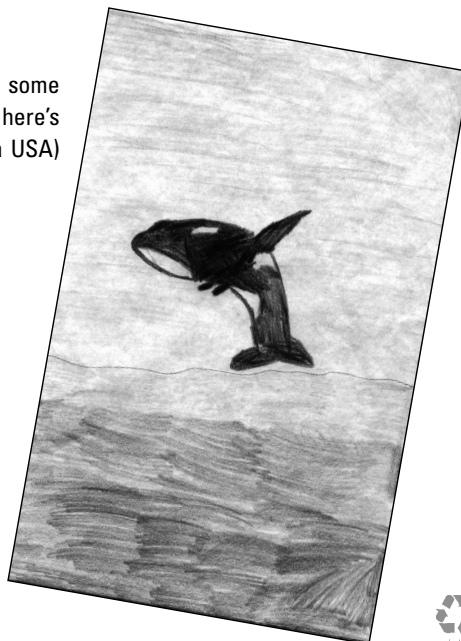
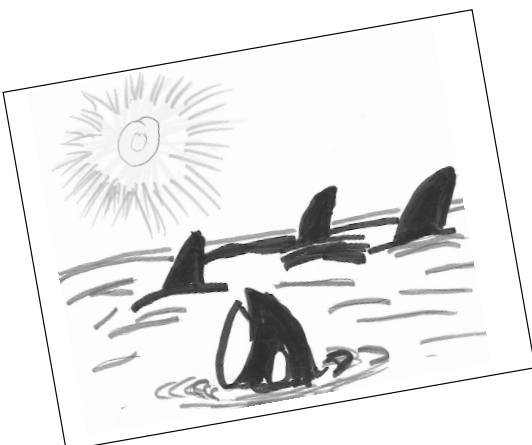
McVeigh looks forward to her first wild killer whale encounter. In the meantime, she's thrilled to be on the adoption team. "The adoption program is about finding out all we can about these whales so that we can do our best to protect them. I'm proud to be a part of that effort."

### THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who has donated their time and energy to the adoption program throughout the years. And a very special thank you to **all whale adopters** for continuing to make this program possible.

## Your Artwork

Thank you to all the talented young artists who contributed some great killer whale drawings. Sorry we can't show them all, but here's a sampling: (left) **Rachel Badowski**, age 6 (Lakeville, Indiana USA) and **Maximilian Pfaff**, age 6 (Moosinning, Germany).



### PODPOURRI

#### New student scholarship created

In addition to supporting research, your generosity will soon begin to groom the next generation of whale researchers.

A B.C. Wild Killer Whale Adoption Program Scholarship Trust Fund is being established with an initial \$10,000 from donations and killer whale adoption program memberships.

Starting in 2006, the investment income from the trust fund will award a scholarship every year to a deserving graduate student working on a cetacean research project. The first scholarship will likely be about \$1,500. The award amount in subsequent years will grow along with the trust fund.

"Once the money is in the trust fund it will remain there as a permanent legacy, so it is in every sense an investment in the future of whale conservation and research," says the adoption program's supervisor, Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard.

For more information about the scholarship or to make a donation to the scholarship fund, call (604) 659-3430 or e-mail [adoption@vanaqua.org](mailto:adoption@vanaqua.org).



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