



ABALONE WATCH

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Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards



Council of the Haida Nation
Haida Fisheries Program



Laskeek Bay Conservation Society



World Wildlife Fund Canada



Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve
and Haida Heritage Site



Skidegate Band Council



Old Massett Village Council

Canada
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Canada
Environment Canada



Centre for Wildlife Ecology at
Simon Fraser University

1.800.465.4336



On May 11th, a dead juvenile fin whale was reported floating in Dixon Entrance. A week later, the 10-metre long whale washed up at the far end of North Beach. Fin whales are the second largest of all whales, distinctive among baleen whales because of their asymmetrically coloured head – the lower jaw is light on the right and dark on the left. Can you guess why? *photo: Sharon Jeffery, HFP*

Making Haida Gwaii Coast Watch Better

On a sunny Saturday in April, almost 20 devoted Haida Gwaii Coast Watch members met at the Haida Heritage Centre at Kaay Llnagaay to kick off the first annual workshop dedicated to learning more about species-at-risk, sharing what we have done over the year, and working together to improve our Coast Watch network.

The main message from the workshop, and also suggested in past Coast Watch surveys, is to improve the communication system for confidential reporting of suspicious activities. While there was much grumbling about the unreliable GlobalStar satellite phone system (something we unfortunately cannot improve upon ourselves), some productive ideas emerged from discussions, including switching the satellite service from GlobalStar to the more reliable and consistent Iridium service for the Watchmen Camps.

The Coast Watch workshop started off with an extensive talk

by Laura Feyrer, a gray whale researcher from ‘The Whale Lab’ at the University of Victoria, on how to interpret whale behaviour and guidelines for watching marine mammals in the wild. After lunch, Sharon Jeffery, the Haida Fisheries Program (HFP) dive biologist, updated the group on their northern abalone research projects. Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Conservation and Protection Officers Beth Guptil and John Currie were on hand along with Pat Fairweather of the HFP to talk about enforcement and monitoring issues and the Haida Guardian Program. The afternoon finished with an open discussion on ways to improve the Haida Gwaii Coast Watch network.

Everyone agreed that we should have yearly workshops like this so that we can keep learning from one another. As a gesture of thanks from the Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards (HGAbS) for their involvement over the years, participants were sent home with Abalone

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Coast Watch toques to keep them warm, a field guide to marine mammals or shellfish, a keychain flashlight and more outreach information for themselves and their guests.

It's been a busy spring for the HGAbS – in addition to the Coast Watch workshop, we hosted Laura as guest speaker at public presentations in Masset and Skidegate. She described whale behaviours and what they might mean, impressing upon us how little we really know about these elusive, charismatic marine creatures.

In March, Jared Towers from the DFO marine mammal unit in Nanaimo gave a workshop on how to take photos for identification of killer whales and humpback whales, including where to send identification photos for the BC database. Jared also engaged Islands residents in evening public presentations in Masset and Skidegate, sharing a historical reflection on killer whale research and changing perceptions in BC. The biology and ecology of resident, transient and offshore killer whales, and humpback whales, were shared through beautiful photos, maps and discussions. Thanks to all who joined us!

Over the summer HGAbS will be continuing outreach about abalone and whales at community events. Look for us and our colourful new banners at Skidegate Days and in the Haida Gwaii Marine Matters booth at the Tlell Fall Fair. As kids have come to expect, marine creatures will be brought to the fair in a touch tank and we will have much more for adults and kids alike!



WILD WHALES: Have you seen any lately?

Free Public Presentations

by Caitlin Birdsall, Vancouver Aquarium Research Assistant

MASSET • Friday, June 5th, Dixon Entrance Museum

SKIDEGATE • Saturday, June 6th, Haida Heritage Centre Classroom

Both nights • Doors open 6:30pm; Presentation 7:00 - 8:30pm

Please Join Us for Refreshments & Door Prizes!

BC Abalone Now Endangered

by Haida Fisheries Program

As we work together to protect marine species-at-risk, it is important to step back and see where we have succeeded or fallen short. In April of this year, the status of northern abalone in BC was changed from threatened to endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) – meaning that abalone face imminent extirpation or extinction and need our help more than ever to survive.

The overall decline in abalone abundance, despite our education, research and outreach activities, should motivate us to increase our vigilance for suspicious activities on the water, and to report them. In fact, poaching is identified as the single largest threat to abalone recovery in BC.

Any information that DFO Conservation and Protection officers receive – even if it's too late to catch a poacher red-handed – can help them build a case, or be aware of who to keep an eye on.

You can use any of these avenues to report suspicious activities:

1. Call the confidential reporting Hotline: 1.800.465.4336
2. Fill out and send in an Occurrence Report (download at: http://www.marinematters.org/programs/CoastWatchOccurrenceReport_WebForm.pdf)
3. Call your local DFO or Haida Fisheries office with details.

Ultimately, abalone population recovery is in everyone's best interest – especially for abalone and the marine species and people that depend on them.

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