

Thanks to the **Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries** for both its financial and administrative support of the right whale surveillance and habitat monitoring program, now wrapping up its eighth season.

The large whale disentanglement program thanks the **NOAA Fisheries** for ongoing support.

We are also grateful to the following individuals and organizations for their generous ongoing support: **Edward McC. Blair, Lauren Riendeau and Gerald Waneck, Nicholas Skinner, the Vaughan W. Brown Charitable Trust, and the Wellfleet Foundation.**

Staff Notes

As the first of the season's humpback whales begin to arrive back on Stellwagen Bank, so too do the Center's whale watch naturalists. Returning this season are senior naturalist **Dr. Carole Carlson**, who has made over 2,500 trips with the Center and the Dolphin Fleet since 1982; **Mark Gilmore, Clarisse Hart, Nancy Scaglione-Peck**, and last year's newcomer **Mike Bertoldi**. They join CCS year-round staffers **Joanne Jarzowski, Amy Kennedy, Owen Nichols** and **Mike Reardon**. This year, Mike Bertoldi is taking on the new role of whale watch coordinator while whale watch director Joanne Jarzowski takes on the additional role of running the MassSail program. Newcomers this year are **Karen Rankin-Baransky**, a veteran naturalist who previously worked from Plymouth, **Irene Briga**, an old friend of the Center and the Dolphin Fleet, who has worked aboard the boats previously as a videographer, and **Beth Swineford**, an environmental education teacher at East Stroudsburg High School in Pennsylvania.

Just as those humpbacks arrive on the Bank, the right whales begin to take their leave of Cape Cod Bay. The right whale survey and habitat teams come down from the skies and in from the sea to compile and analyze their data and samples and prepare reports. They are a dedicated and hard-working bunch, but their work could not be completed without the support of some unsung heroes of the Center: **Marc Costa, John Ambroult** and **John Shea**. Marc is our marine ops manager, keeps the vessels in Bristol fashion and has put in the same grueling hours at sea all winter as his research colleagues. And he'll keep on doing it through most of the humpback season. **John Ambroult** is the Center's longtime pilot of choice for the aerial survey, and as familiar with the Bay's right whales as the observers he flies along the track lines. **John Shea**, the Center's controller, came out of retirement six years ago after running several companies to become steward of our finances. Thanks, guys.

COASTWATCH

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The humpback whale known as Beanie.
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HARBOR NOTES

PCCS-P=CCS+P=PCCS

by Peter Borrelli

In February the board of directors voted to change our name back to its 1976 original; namely, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies. At the time I told local reporters that we were mimicking a number of professional sports teams by donning our throwback uniforms. However, the name change was not intended as a gimmick and was seriously debated by the board.

I have a confession to make. During the nine months the issue was on the agenda, I was equally persuaded by both sides of the debate. To change or not to change. It required several votes and a few directors found themselves voting both for and against. We probably spent more time debating this than the founders of the Center spent naming the critter in the first place.

But I know now that this was *absolutely* the right thing to do. And that is because in the fields of environmental science, education, and policy I believe that you are largely defined by *where* you are. It is a corollary of that other truism that all politics are local.

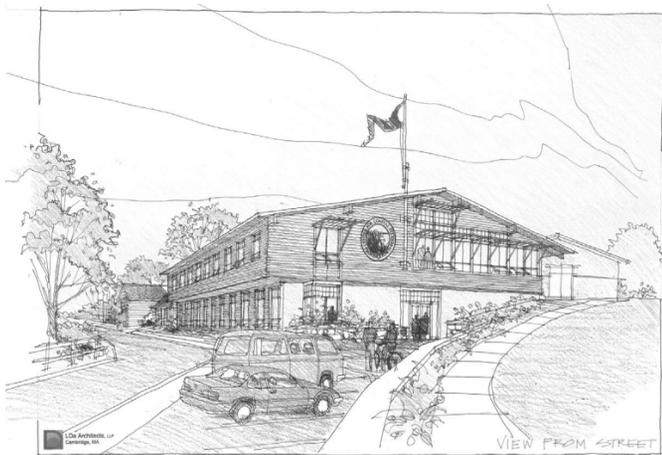
In the mid-'80s "Provincetown" was dropped from the name to reflect the Center's growing reputation in the field of marine mammal research. Since the whales we were studying were migratory, taking our researchers far beyond the coastal waters of P-Town from the Bay of Fundy to the Caribbean, the name change was somewhat of a teenage rebellion from the Center's grassroots beginning.

Today, our whale research and rescue activities are greater than ever, but our



mission and purpose is unmistakably rooted in the Western North Atlantic and more specifically in the state and federal waters of Massachusetts, where Provincetown is our homeport.

The reality that the Center is a Provincetown institution involves much more than letterheads and logos. It also means that we have to secure our base of operations in a relatively remote and congested location where real estate values are rising out of sight. For the past five years several committees of the board have been wrestling with the problem of finding suitable facilities to accommodate current research and rescue programs, to expand our education programs, and for room to grow over the course of the next ten years.



Future PCCS Research and Education Building

The reality that the Center is a Provincetown institution involves much more than letterheads and logos.

On April 4 Provincetown voters almost unanimously approved a plan to sell the Center a 10,000-square foot building that has served as an annex to the high school. The vote of Town Meeting was preceded by a 9-0 vote of approval by the town's diligent finance committee, a 5-0 vote of the school committee and a 4-1 vote of the board of selectmen. In Provincetown such unanimity is virtually unheard of. I think it is fair to say that just as the Center has reaffirmed its ties to Provincetown, the town has reaffirmed its esteem for the Center.

Acquisition and renovation of the building is expected to take about two years and cost approximately \$2.5 million. We are especially pleased that this opportunity will enable us to grow without further disturbing the Cape's fragile landscape. The initial design concept calls for making this a highly energy efficient building, utilizing as many "green" building materials and technologies as possible. Stay tuned for further details on our building and fundraising plans. ■

Gulf of Maine humpbacks due for annual check-up

Gulf of Maine humpback whales can be viewed in the wild less than 30 nautical miles from Boston. Such proximity has made this endangered species the most intensively studied baleen whale population in the world, and one that the Center has tracked continuously since the 1970s. Program director Jooke Robbins and her staff recognize over 1,600 cataloged individuals based on the unique pigmentation pattern on their flukes.

Once cataloged, re-sightings of individuals at different times and places shed insight into their unique life histories, which may include, in addition to fluke patterns, their gender, calving rates, matrilineal history and age. When combined, individual lives inform us about the status of the population and the ecology of the species. The Center's catalog is one of the most comprehensive of its kind for a cetacean species.

The Gulf of Maine is one of the primary humpback whale feeding grounds in the North Atlantic. From April through November, individuals must accumulate sufficient fat reserves to sustain them during their winter breeding season at low latitudes. Females must not only support themselves, but their newborn calves. However, their relative proximity makes them vulnerable to injury and mortality from human activities. Entanglements, ship strikes and habitat degradation all have the potential to impact individual health and survival. Even if they are not immediately fatal, these events may hamper foraging in summer, resulting in long-term consequences to survival and reproduction.

Field season begins with a new study on the effects of entanglement on whale health

But the degree of impact is often difficult to determine. There is no agreement on how to assess sub-lethal health impacts on these elusive animals, and most deaths go unobserved. Insight often depends on long-term observations of individuals, which is challenging for any large animal population in the wild. It requires hundreds of hours of painstaking observation, sampling under varying weather



conditions, meticulous data entry and record keeping; hundreds of more hours conducting lab analyses; and finally, reaching and publishing the findings of the given study.

When you add to that mix a marine mammal that is among the largest animals ever to live on Earth, you have your work cut out for you – basically, the task is to document the lives of super-sized animals in a super-sized environment. Although they frequent our coastal waters, these large animals must also range widely in



search of food. Individuals may "disappear" for years at a time, even decades, before being sighted again. They spend most of their time under water, away from the prying eyes of researchers. There are no outward signs of pregnancy and so newborn calves must survive a 1,500 nautical mile journey from their West Indies calving ground before researchers are aware that a birth has occurred.

This year the humpback program is attempting to better assess humpback whale health and survival, particularly after entanglement in fishing gear. Since 1997, the program has generated the best information available on humpback whale entanglement rates, as inferred from patterns of scarring. In this new study, the Center will collaborate with scientists from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to study nutritive characteristics both by visual cues and by quantitative analysis of small blubber samples obtained by biopsy sampling techniques. The results should add another important piece in the puzzle of humpback whale health that will allow scientists and resource managers to preserve this species.

For more information on the Gulf of Maine humpback program, please visit our website at <http://www.coastalstudies.org/what-we-do/humpback-whales/introduction.htm>. ■

FRIENDS

Feo Pitcairn is a Philadelphia-based filmmaker whose family-run Beneficia Foundation has been an ardent and longtime friend and supporter of the Center's humpback whale program.

The Beneficia Foundation discovered the Center in 1994 after Pitcairn, who makes films about whales, met program director David Mattila for the first time on Silver Bank in the West Indies. Ever since, he has enthusiastically followed Mattila's work and that of current program director Jooke Robbins (Mattila is now coordinator of research and rescue for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary).

Pitcairn credits the two with building a world-renowned database on the

Gulf of Maine humpback population that includes reproductive, entanglement and scarring histories, and is documented by DNA from over 800 individuals, which he calls "invaluable to the future of the species." He also applauds their extensive international participation in worldwide whale conservation by providing much-needed scientific expertise to regulatory bodies such as the International Whaling Commission.

Pitcairn is himself a preservationist of the humpback by recording its life on film. He is completing his most recent documentary, "Secrets of the Humpbacks," that will premiere in Provincetown this coming fall as a benefit to the Center's

Fisheries lectures scheduled for July 2005

The Center is serving up a couple of favorite fish dishes in early July at a special lecture mini-series by the authors of two highly acclaimed books, *The Secret Life of Lobsters: How Fishermen and Scientists are Unraveling the Mysteries of Our Favorite Crustacean* and *Striper Wars: An American Fish Story*. Both Trevor Corson and Dick Russell, the respective authors, are celebrated journalists and fishermen of their chosen subjects. Both address the complicated but fascinating juxtaposition of fishermen, managers and scientists at the heart of fisheries management – and the consequences that arise when the conflicts among these parties prove unsolvable. Corson will speak July 12 and Russell July 19. Both lectures will be held at 7 p.m., at WOMR, 494 Commercial Street in Provincetown. ■

Center elects new board members, creates advisor role

Barbara Birdsey, founder of the Pegasus Foundation, and Alix Ritchie, owner and publisher of *The Provincetown Banner*, were elected to the Center's board of directors at its annual meeting on April 30. Birdsey is also a founder of the Orenda Wildlife Land Trust. Ritchie, a fellow longtime environmental activist, was a driving force behind the formation of the Cape Cod Commission.

For the first time, the board also voted to approve the appointment of 17 individuals as advisors to the board. The Center will draw upon their expertise for counsel and support in developing new research and educational programs, in strategic planning, and in fundraising. For a complete list of the board of directors and advisors, please visit our website at <http://www.coastalstudies.org/who-we-are/index.htm>. ■



Feo Pitcairn

humpback program. In October 2002, Pitcairn spent two weeks with a humpback mother and her calf, near a little island in French Polynesia, an hour and a half flying time south of Tahiti, and has seen humpbacks up close.

"The ocean is a dynamic place," he declares, filled with leviathans and smaller wonders; but humpbacks are near and dear to his heart and he calls them "great animals," adding "I have to say my experiences and encounters with humpbacks have topped everything else, because they're very intelligent animals, they have a zest for life, a range of behaviors, and I think the public identifies with them, too." ■

Center launches kayak season with eco-tours

Guided kayak tours through some of the most beautiful marshes and inlets of the Cape will be led by PCCS Coastal Awareness Coordinator Dick Hilmer throughout the summer and into the fall. Cost is \$30 for PCCS members, and \$49 for non-members (which includes a special introductory membership to the Center). Instruction, safety tips and all equipment are included; Dick is a certified kayaking instructor who has been taking people kayaking since 1999 and has a wealth of enthusiasm and knowledge to share with paddlers. The guided kayak tours are part of Waterways of Cape Cod, a PCCS project to map local coastal kayak routes. For complete schedule information, please consult our website, www.coastalstudies.org; for reservations, please e-mail Dick directly at dhilmer@coastalstudies.org. ■