

LILY'S STORY

Sometimes, it's important to put a face on the suffering animals endure.

This newsletter is devoted to the many Gray Whales who died of starvation in this current season. Whales died because of a lack of food, emaciated whales were seen in places they're not usually seen, desperately searching for food. The lack of prey a direct result of the impact of climate change in their primary feeding grounds in the Arctic.

Some whales got snarled up in the nets and lines which make the coastal zones a migratory hell for any marine species. In Dana Point Harbour, a young Gray Whale died after a courageous week long battle to stay alive. Her death moved many, and no wonder. Her efforts to survive grabbed the hearts of the entire community as they watched her fate unfold.

Entangled in fishing nets and ropes, many folk believe that Lily, as she was named, came to Dana Point Harbour for help. Here is her story as told by someone who witnessed the whole sad affair.

" May 17. Bound with fishing nets and ropes, Lily was a testimony to her determination to survive. Like so many others, I felt she came to Dana Point for help. She went to Doheny Beach, swimming right up next to the jetties, then stayed at Baby Beach inside the Harbour.

" People in charge " announced this was just an old whale that had come here to die. Fortunately, someone had called in Sea World who freed the whale. It was clear

she was not an " old whale " but a 4-5 year old juvenile who wanted nothing more than to live. Lily allowed the zodiac boat from Sea World to say on top of her because she knew she was being helped, very unusual behaviour for a whale.

But Lily was so emaciated she was unable to continue her journey north. She kept returning to Dana Point Harbour looking for food, for some kind of nourishment. A few days later, Lily was spotted just slightly beyond the Harbour, diving and blowing, normal whale behaviour. She was surrounded by jet skis, paddle boards, kayakers, leaving the whale fatigued and stressed.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DANA POINT TIMES.

No one seemed to care.

I watched two kayakers go up right next to the whale. I saw the Orange County Sheriff's boat out there, bumping into the whale numerous times. I left in tears. A few hours later I came back to see her struggling to swim in deeper waters but now surrounded by the Sheriff's boat and the Harbor patrol boat.

They were running over her and backing into her. I was sickened observing this, I couldn't stop crying.

Not much later I found out she had died. A spear fishermen who saw Lily just before her body was towed out to sea said she had a huge gash in her tail.

A necropsy was never done to determine the cause of death. "

Lily's suffering lasted an entire week. A long time for a starving whale to be subjected to such

indifference and lack of care by the authorities who should have known better. National Marine & Fisheries Service personnel should hang their heads in shame over the way this whale was treated.

There's no excuse for the state authorities either, their lack of protection and obscenely indifferent and callous treatment of a sick, injured whale is unforgivable.

One surfer stayed with Lily until her final moments, he says she 'spoke' to him several times and seemed comforted by his presence.

The community was so moved that a celebration of Lily was held so that people could honour the young whale who aroused the compassion of Dana Point residents



NO, WE CAN'T FEED STARVING WHALES

It is simply impossible to feed starving whales. Although JJ, a young orphaned gray whale was taken in by Sea World some years ago, and successfully fed and released (though we have no idea what happened to the whale or whether she survived in the wild), it cost thousands and thousands of dollars and required a dedicated staff .

She was eating about ten pounds of squid per a day. J J also ate krill, and two kinds of fish. When she first arrived, she was fed a milk mixture through a tube.

There are many problems in feeding wild whales, especially Gray Whales which are specialist feeders. Their primary diet consists of amphipods which grow in the Bering and Chukchi Seas. Gray whales are the only bottom feeding whale. The amphipods they live on thrive in the muddy seafloors of the North Pacific Ocean. A single gray whale is believed to turn over 50 acres of sediment during a season of feeding. The mud thus churned is oxygenated, exposed to the nutrient rich water and is in effect seeded for the next years harvest. During feeding, the gray whale appears to prefer using its right side to scour the bottom and find its food.

During migration Gray whales eat very little, although they



PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES DORSEY

occasionally will eat shrimp-like mysids or small fish at the surface. If there's insufficient food in their primary feeding grounds up North, the migration takes its toll as there's not enough energy to allow the whales to go without food for up to five months. This is one reason why so few cows and calves have been seen over the last four seasons.

Juvenile whales, like Lily, undertake the long migration

without adequate fat reserves. The death toll of young whales this year has been a strong indicator that something is wrong in the Arctic. killing off the Gray Whales as they have no adequate alternative prey.

It's just not possible to dump a pile of krill or small fish into the sea in the hope that a whale will eat.

Nor is it possible to catch a wild whale and move it to a captive situation. The kindest thing in a situation like this is to euthenase the whale. And that can also lead to more horror unless it's done properly.

In 1999/2000, more than one third of the Gray Whale population died of starvation. Many were adult females. A strong El Nino was thought to be responsible. But since that time climatic conditions have got much worse with sea ice disappearing (and with it the major nutrients for Gray Whale prey) at an extraordinary rate.

POSITIVE ACTION

The Coalition is entirely focused on relisting the Gray Whale under the US Endangered Species Act.

To do this, a great deal of research must be undertaken as only the best science is considered. Whilst relisting won't provide more food for whales, it will ensure a much higher level of legal protection and funds for desperately needed research.

We need to build up a massive level of public support for the Gray Whale so that politicians, both State and Federal, are persuaded to work for the relisting.

SUPPORT LISA NOLAN

Please support the Aussie Mother of four who is running a 21km marathon in Sydney, Australia in mid September. Lisa is running for the Gray Whales and her goal is to raise \$2000.00. All details can be found on the Yes We Can! Save the California GrayWhale Cause page on Face Book, see below.

ACTION DONATIONS PLEASE

The Coalition is working tirelessly to raise awareness of the plight of the magnificent Gray Whales. Their survival is on the line and there's never been a more urgent time to get involved. With the IWC meeting now over, many people think the Gray Whale is safe. Gray Whales are in great peril and only a massive public outcry will make a difference.

Donations can be sent to..... P.O. Box 50939 Palo Alto, CA 94303 or online from our website: www.californiagraywhalecoalition.org

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