

**The
Whale Watching
Education Programme
in Vava'u, Tonga
and the
Implementation of
Whale Watch Operators
and
Guides Training**

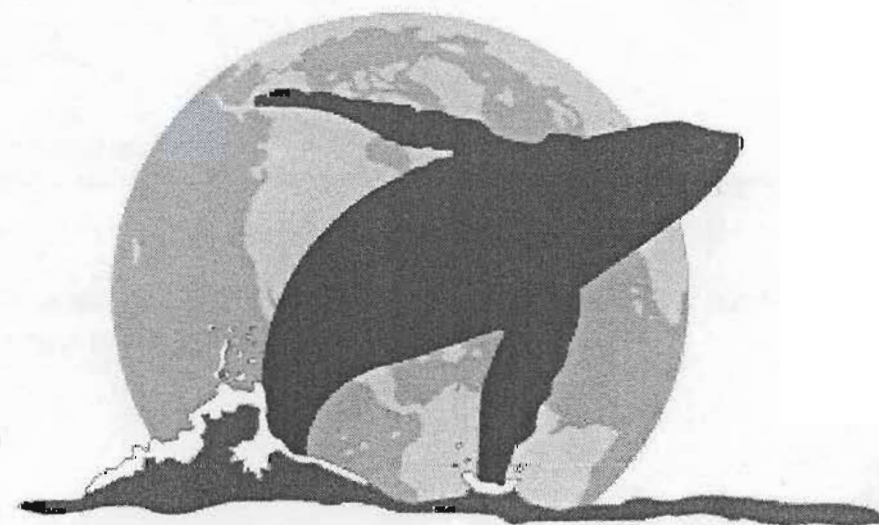
Report of 1999 Season

by
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WHALES ALIVE

BACKGROUND

Whales Alive and SPREP are working together to support the sustainable development of whale watching nature tourism in the Kingdom of Tonga. In August 1996 SPREP/Whales Alive conducted, at the invitation of the Government of Tonga, a joint Whale Watching Operators and Guides Training Workshop. This Workshop recommended the development of guidelines for whale watch tourism operations in Tonga and developed a Vision 2000 for Whale Watching Tourism in Tonga. In early 1997 the Government of Tonga invited SPREP/Whales Alive to facilitate the development of guidelines for whale watching and advise on their trial, evaluation and any training necessary. Guidelines have now been produced, trialled and evaluated.

The purpose of the work in 1999 was to provide for more specific training in the use of the guidelines and wider education and public awareness initiatives as promoted in the Tonga's Vision for Whale Watching.

(see attached vision)

1. Develop a Resource Centre in Nuku'alofa

To develop a Resource Centre in Nuku'alofa to house Tongan Whale educational and teaching aids and whale watch marketing tools. Resources may include literature, 35mm slides, video, posters, handouts, transparencies and others. The centre will house expertise from Community Resource Persons and other teachers will become the main public and school presentations.

2. Public Whale Presentations

To collect the awareness of whales and conservation, whale watching and to encourage the application of the whale watch guidelines within the hosting community by making public presentations at:

- community meetings in Nuku'alofa
- village meetings outside of Nuku'alofa
- school meetings

3. School Presentations

Meet with professionals from the Department of Education in Nuku'alofa to plan for "whale" presentations for the schools.

In the longer term to make school visits to assist for teachers and the students an insight and understanding of Tongan whales.



TRAINING OBJECTIVES FOR 1999

1) *Whale Watch Operators and Guides*

Assist commercial whale watch operators to write and practice presenting to tourists about the Tongan Whales and to motivate tourists to go on a whale watch.

2) To continue the on-going training of whale watch operators and guides - conducting classroom trainings at each of the operators place of business i.e. individual training sessions for each of the companies in a more informal setting, to encourage more Tongan involvement.

- working with them one-on-one on the water aboard commercial whale watches. To engage in a dialogue while under real life conditions about the application of the whale watch guidelines. To assist in the practising and modelling the language of narrating a whale watch in order to enhance the customers experience.

3) *Community Resource Person*

To continue to develop local Tongans in Vava'u as Community Resource Persons to educate tourists and local Tongans about whales and to promote whale watching.

4) *Resource /Whale Centre*

Develop a Resource Centre in Neiafu to house Tongan Whale educational and teaching aids and whale watch marketing tools. Resources may include literature, 35mm slides, videos, graphics, visual aids, hand outs, transparencies and others. This centre will house materials that Community Resource Persons and other teachers will borrow for their public and school presentations.

5) *Public Whale Presentations*

To enhance the awareness of whales and conservation, whale watching and to encourage the application of the whale watch guidelines within the boating community by making public presentations at;

- resorts
- community meetings in Neiafu
- village meetings outside of Neiafu in Vava'u
- radio station

6) *School Presentations*

Meet with representatives from the Department of Education in Nuku'alofa to plan for "whale" curriculum for the schools.

In the interim continue to make school visits to create for teachers and their students an interest and understanding of Tongan whales.



TRAINING OBJECTIVE #1 & 2

WHALE WATCH OPERATORS AND GUIDES

Wednesday 15th September

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Trainer - Mel Rice

Skipper - John Beauchamp. Crew - Viliami

Training was undertaken during a commercial whale watch.

This trip passengers were in the water swimming with a mother and calf Humpback ,

Tuesday 21st September

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'MELINDA'

Skipper - Nis, Filipe. Crew - Soape. Owner - Christy

Trainers - Mel Rice, Mick McIntyre, Filipe Tonga, Olive Andrews

Training concentrated on whale watch techniques whilst under sail including approaches to whales.

Filipe showed his skills as a boat captain whilst under sail around the whales.

Soape listened to Olive speak about whales

Filipe practised taking research data including fluke id film frames, weather conditions, pod compositions.

Sunday 26th September

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Skipper - John, Crew - Viliami

Trainers - Mick McIntyre, Mel Rice and Olive Andrews

Training aboard commercial whale watch.

No whales sighted all trip.

Monday September 27th

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Trainers - Mick, Olive

Skipper - Ongo, Crew - Aunofo

4 paying passengers

Aunofo participated in the opening talk to passengers about whales.

Using the plastic model whales she presented to the passengers an example of competitive behaviour that she had experienced recently whilst whale watching.

Ongo discussed with Olive the guidelines and boat manoeuvring around whales.

The trip included approx. 60 minutes with a pair of surface active whales.

The conditions were windy and there was swell. Ongo's manoeuvring of the boat was very good and he positioned the boat in a way to track alongside the whales as they continued with their surface activity.



*Onboard Whale Song
Ongo Kaitae'ifo and Aunofo Havea*



The 1999 training team devised a plan to offer the training to companies at their place of business, as an alternative to having them at a public venue. The first of these was held at the office of Sailing Safaris.

Monday September 27th

TRAINING AT SAILING SAFARIS OFFICE, NEIAFU

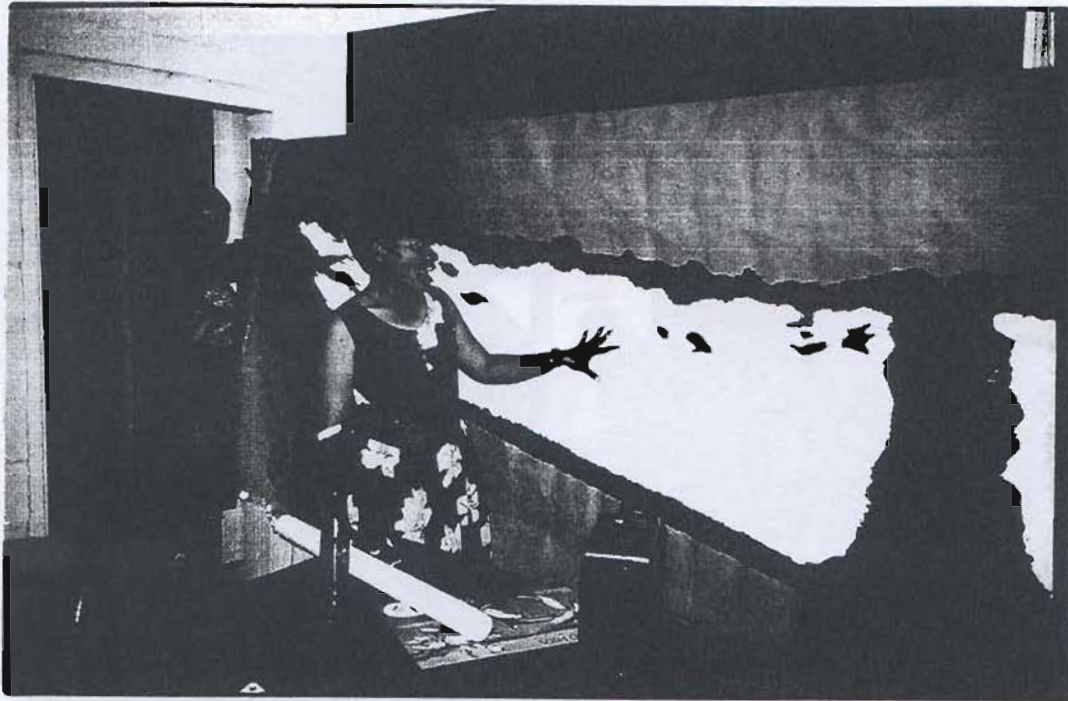
5.30 - 7.00 pm

John Beauchomb, Ammisia, Ongo, Aunofo, Viliami,
Trainers - Mick McIntyre, Mel Rice and Olive Andrews

Ongo spent time with Viliami interpreting information about whales to him in Tongan.
Aunofo used the life sized drawing of a whales tail to explain some of the natural history
of the Humpback.



Aunofo explaining the Life size whales tail



Wednesday 29th September

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Skipper - Ongo. Crew - Anoufo

Trainer - Mick McIntyre

Training Aunofo, explaining behaviours to the passengers in partnership with Mick. Whales breaching in the distance as we approached the breaching continued, giving the passengers a good look at the whales. Weather was windy and rough.

Thursday 30th September

TRAINING AT THE OFFICE OF DOLPHIN PACIFIC DIVING

All the participants were first season staff

Sean Lally, Philip Wheeler, Tawinika Harding ,

Kerry Quin and Charlie Van Straubenzee from Friendly Island Kayak Company.

Trainers - Mick, Mel and Olive

As the participants were first year around whales, the trainers treated as a basic training and the lessons included; slides of Whale behaviours, video of underwater competitive groups, mother and calf and feeding in Alaska.



Training at the office of Dolphin Pacific Diving



Thursday 30th September

TRAINING AT THE OFFICE OF KIWI MAGIC

Trainers Mel and Mick visited owners Pat and Keith and their daughter Alyse.

Discussion was held about political climate in Tonga re: whaling.

Trainers heard a summary of their whale watching/fishing season so far.

They gave their suggestions of further lobbying options in regards to stopping the resumption of whaling in Tonga.

Mel spoke with Pat about setting up a presentation at daughter Alyse's primary school.

Friday 1st October

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Skipper - Ongo and crew Aunofo

Trainer - Mick McIntyre

Six passengers

Mick started the whale presentation to the passengers and then passed over to Aunofo who shared some of her stories about her experience with the whales this season.

This included using the plastic model whale to explain a mother and calf breaching.



Friday 1st October

TRAINING AT FRIENDLY ISLAND KAYAK COMPANY

Participants - Doug Spence, Sharon Spence, Nicola Tonga, Epeli Lavaki, Charlie Van Straubenzee, Kerry Quin, Ave Mafi.

Trainers - Mel Rice, Filipe Tonga and Olive Andrews

Training was conducted in two segments with a break in-between.

The first session focused the group on how they practice eco-tourism whilst being a guide. Each participant contributed key points on how to use the environment as a classroom in order to raise awareness about marine conservation and indigenous culture.

The second session saw the group divided into two language specific classes. Mel leading a bilingual presentation with the Tongan guides on basic whale anatomy, migration and feeding, while Olive and Filipe presented overheads and shared discussion with the English speaking guides and company directors on the acoustic behaviours of toothed and baleen whales found in Tongan waters, cetacean evolution, and feeding.

The Outcomes included

- The company was left with a sheet of self devised objectives pertaining to eco-tourism guiding.
- Staff who had received previous training enhanced their knowledge of Cetacea and ability to present whale information to their guests.
- Emphasis was placed on assisting the head Tongan guide to teach the other Tongan guides in Tongan.

Saturday 2nd October

SOKI ISLAND TOURS

Onboard commercial snorkel trip

Skipper - Soki

Trainer - Mel Rice

Training consisted of teaching him how to narrate the natural history of whales of Tonga during a snorkel charter, prompting him to use laminated photos of the whales.

Encouraging and teaching how to interact with his passengers about the islands and the snorkel spots he takes them too.

Teaching him how to interpret the marine world and to recognise the families of fish and to describe the coral animal.

Wednesday 6th October

TRAINING ON COMMERCIAL WHALE WATCH BOAT 'WHALE SONG'

Skipper - Ongo, Crew - Aunofo and Fisheries Officer - Ve'a Kava

Trainers - Mel Rice, Olive Andrews

This was the fourth training onboard Whale Song for this season and again Aunofo was given the opportunity to present to the passengers mother calf behaviours, resting, protective swimming. She used plastic models of whales and life size baby whale.

Ve'a shared to the passengers his work with the whale research team and showed the Tongan fluke ID catalogue. He also told about his trip to Auckland where he assisted with the research at Auckland University.

Ve'a took on the role as research data collector and research photographer.

The trip consisted of an encounter with a mother and calf humpback passengers were from Hungary, Netherlands Australia and New Zealand.



Thursday 7th October

**STAFF TRAINING FOR 'MELINDA'
PORT WINE GUEST HOUSE, NEIAFU**

Skipper - Nis, Crew - Soape and Owner - Christy

Trainers - Filipe Tonga, Olive Andrews and Mel Rice

The training started with underwater videos of Humpbacks and teaching the connections between what is typically seen from the surface to what the videos show underwater.

The training included Soape learning and practising some of the language that goes with narrating a whale watch e.g., scientific name for whales migratory patterns, size of the whale weight and through the use of still photography creating opportunities for the participants to explain aerial displays, and give possible explanations for this display

Friday 8th - Wednesday 13th October

A FIVE DAY KAYAK TRIP WITH FRIENDLY ISLAND KAYAK COMPANY

Trainers - Mel Rice, Olive Andrews,

Participants - Kayak Guides Epeli Lavaki, Sharon Spence, and Kerry Quin

The trainers went on this kayak trip to compliment the kayak guides knowledge of marine life which is extensive. Teaching them a presentation model where the new information is being delivered while utilising visual aids, check and revisit for understanding, through a series of questions the presenter is checking the learner's level of understanding. This enables the presenter to make an accurate prescription about what to teach next. Some of the content areas include humpback whales, sea turtles, reef ecology including the relationship between coral, algae, fish and invertebrates.

This on the water training gives the learner an opportunity to apply what they learnt in the classroom training e.g.. Humpback whale life cycle, migration, whale song, feeding, behaviours.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES # 3

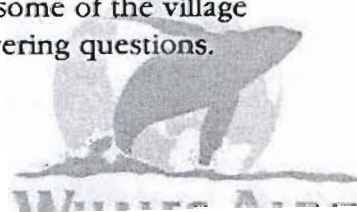
COMMUNITY RESOURCE PERSON

A community resource person is the general term we use to describe a person that lives in the community who actively teaches others about whales and whale conservation.

Vea Kava

The Ministry of Fisheries again gave permission for Vea Kava to participate as a working member of the South Pacific Humpback Research project.

This year Vea also joined the Whales Alive training team and organised some of the village presentations, where he made the presentations in Tongan before answering questions.



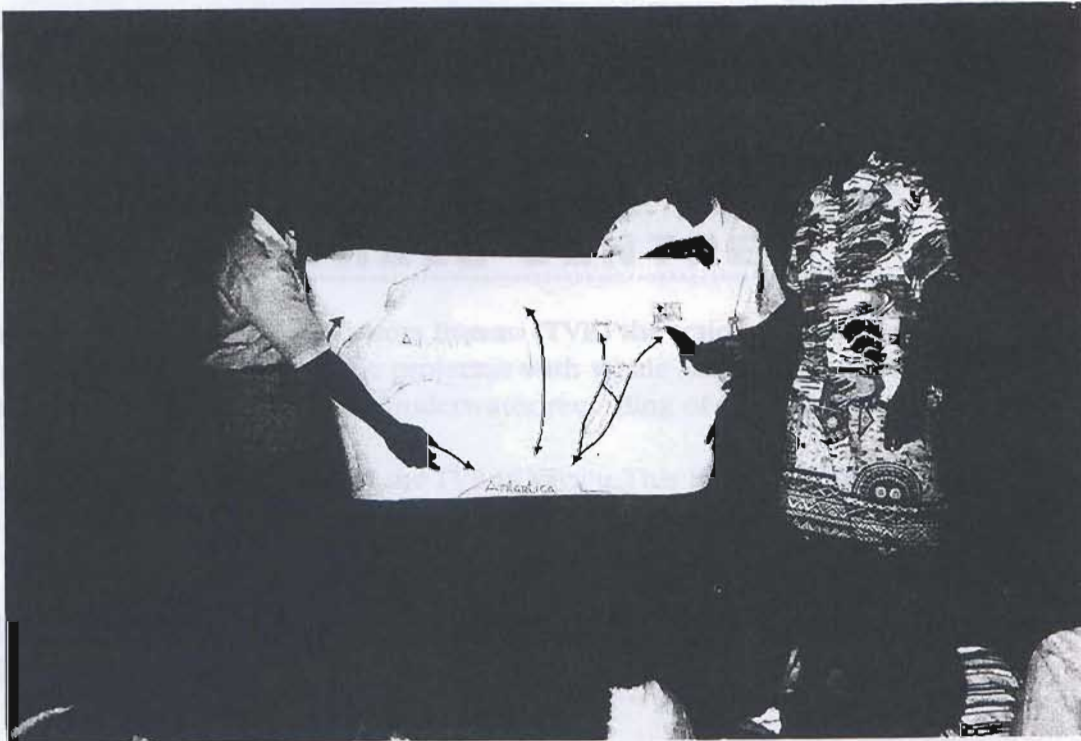
Filipe Tonga

Filipe joined the training team for the fourth year and he was instrumental in getting locals to attend some of the public presentations.

He continues to design a whale presentation in Tongan which he used in a number of villages this year including a presentation at his home village of Ta'anea which his mother and siblings attended.

One of the long term objectives is to train other community resource persons like Filipe. The work we have done with Filipe Tonga, Ve'a Kava and Soki Halauafu is to prepare them to function as marine educators in the community.

Filipe presenting the whales migration



Tuesday September 28th
PORT WINE GUEST HOUSE

Ve'a Kava from the Ministry of Fisheries

Trainer - Mel Rice

A training session that went from 9.00 until the afternoon

Translating the anatomy worksheet into Tongan

Rewrote the whale life cycle sheet

Started the Ministry of Fisheries Vava'u whale resource library

Helped build Ve'a's presentation content



Tuesday 5th October

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, VAVA'U

Report Writing with Ve'a Kava

Trainer - Mel Rice

In April 99 Ve'a was funded to travel to Auckland University to assist with research analysis of the Tongan Humpback Whales, this included the photo ID Fluke catalogue, the song recording and the DNA skin sampling.

Mel assisted Ve'a with the writing of his report to be sent to SPREP

The outcomes included:

- Ve'a established a professional format for report writing, he applied the skill of referring to his field log in order to write the report,
- After observing Rochelle Constantine on the water in New Zealand doing her field research on whales, Ve'a described how he visualised a similar role for him in Tonga having a presence on the water educating and co-ordinating whale watch boat traffic around the whales.
- He was able to evaluate the importance of local involvement in the research of the Humpbacks in Tonga.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES #4 RESOURCE/WHALE CENTRE

In partnership with the Tonga Visitors Bureau (TVB) the training team has created a Whale Education Kit. This includes a slide projector with whale slides, a life size cut out of a baby whale, identification books and an underwater recording of Humpback whale song.

This education kit is being kept at the TVB in Vava'u. This kit will be used by the Community Resource Persons and teachers who can borrow for their public and school presentations.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES #5 PUBLIC WHALE PRESENTATION

Thursday 30th September

TA'ANEA VILLAGE

7.30 - 9.00

Trainers - Mick, Mel, Olive and Filipe

50 - 60 participants (50% children)

WELCOME AND PRAYER BY LOCAL REVEREND

This evening was presented by Filipe in Tongan.

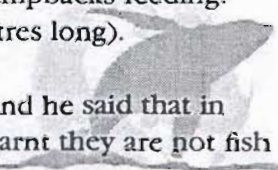
Filipe designed the presentation himself.

He used slides of whale behaviours showing drawings of whale anatomy, feeding, migration and predators and showed videos of mother and calf humpbacks and humpbacks feeding.

He showed the life size paper cut-out of a baby Humpback whale (4 metres long).

At the end of the presentation Filipe answered many questions.

The town officer concluded the evening by thanking the training team and he said that in the past he has only thought of the whale as meat on the table but he learnt they are not fish but mammals that care and nurture for their young.


WHALES ALIVE

Wednesday 29th September

MATA HAKA VILLAGE

The mission team hoped the village would make the crossing to Solas Toman fishing boat
over the
Tasman
Sea
Niles
Over
Vau
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th
Tok

Filipe presenting to Ta'anea village
(where he grew up)



IS ALIVE

Wednesday 29th September

MATA MAKU VILLAGE

The training team braved the windy weather to make the crossing in Sokis Tongan fishing boat. The team took with them - generator, transformer, extension cords, slide projector, overhead projector, TV, VCR.

Trainers - Ve'a Kava, Mel, Mick, Olive, Soki

Ve'a presented in Tongan to about 60 people (40% kids).

Slides of whale behaviours, mother calf, feeding.

Overhead projector for drawings of whales - feeding, migration and anatomy.

Visual aids - life size paper cut out of baby Humpback whale (Tongan name - Taleniti'ia).

The kids loved the colour photos and posters.

Questions were asked about whaling.

A fisherman present expressed that the money made from killing the whale was better for them than the tourist money going to the Palangis.

Town officer thanked us and said that they don't get to see video images very often.

Ve'a Kava presenting to Mata Maka village



PUBLIC/YACHTIES SLIDE NIGHT

8.00 - 9.30

PARADISE HOTEL

Presenters - Mel, Mick, Mike and Dave

This presentation has been given in the paradise Hotel each year since 1994 and it mainly attracts the yachties that are sailing through Tonga.

This is the audience that we design the presentation around but we also know that some locals will attend.

The night began with a warm and thoughtful opening and welcome from Moa from the Tonga Visitors Bureau (TVB). She introduced the presenters from Whales Alive, the South Pacific Research project and Filipe Tonga.

We were pleased to host Pota's wife Luisa who attended with her family. It was standing room only with 150 people.

A night of learning about the Humpback whale.

Talks on the life cycle of the Humpback whale and its long migration from the Antarctic.

Slides and videos were shown of the Humpback whales in Tonga.

The latest research findings from the South Pacific Humpback Whale Research Project were presented, and current report on the whale population.

The whale watching guidelines were examined using diagrams projected overhead. The majority of the audience were private yacht operators. Examples of approach were simulated and this generated discussion amongst operators.

A big crowd for the public slide night at the Paradise Hotel



WHALES ALIVE

Sunday 3rd October

OTEA VILLAGE

Trainer - Mel Rice

A day spent in the village sharing knowledge of the marine world.

Mel took Soki diving to see the marine life under the water near his village

Tuesday 5th October

TAFISI VILLAGE PRESENTATION

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Trainers - Ve'a Kava, Mel Rice, Olive Andrews

Attended by approximately 20 adults and 45 kids.

Peace Corps worker assisted in preparing the village meeting room and co-ordinating invitations.

Vea presented in Tongan using the life size whales tail, the migration map, illustrations of feeding whales, playing of Tongan Whale song, plastic whale models, specimens of krill and barnacles, playing of videos showing underwater mother and calf.

Questions were asked about whaling and whale meat consumption, Vea responded with the information showing the economic force of whale watching.

Saturday 16th October

TOPANA PICNIC

Family and friends of the Port Wine Guest House.

To continue to develop local Tongans in Vava'u as Community Resource Persons to educate tourists and local Tongans about whales and to promote whale watching.

Tuesday 19th October

HUMPBAC WHALES 1999 UPDATE

7.00 PM - 9.00 PM

Meeting convened by the Tongan Visitors Bureau (TVB), Ministry of Fisheries (MoF) and the Ministry of Lands Survey and Natural Resources (MLSNR).

A panel consisting of Bruno Toke and Falatipa Pani/TVB, Ofa MoF, Espera Palaka MLSNR, Sue Miller/SPREP, Mel Rice/Whales Alive, Mike Donoghue/South Pacific Humpback Whale Project, meeting attended by:

Esitimoa, TVB

Peli, Secretary of the Governor of Vava'u

Cecelia, Tourism and Vava'u beautification committee

Soki, Soki Island Tours

Shane Heaps, Natural Mystic Adventures

Vea Kava, MoF

Alan Bowe and Nusa, Whale Watch Vava'u

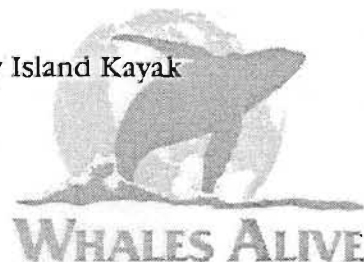
Keith, Kiwi Magic,

John and Amesia, Sailing Safaris

Filipe Tonga, Melinda

Philip Sean Dolphin Pacific Diving

Epeli Lavaki, Doug Spence, Sharon Spence, Kerry Quin, Charlie Friendly Island Kayak company



Vasi , Librarian, Vava'u Public Library
Sandra Gross, Vava'u High School
Fotu and Melanie, Chanel High School,
Tui, wood carver

The meeting discussed and answered questions on the following topics;

Economic benefits of whale watching in Vava'u

SPREP briefing paper to the Government on Tongan humpback whales, whaling and whale watch issues.

Whales Alive education and awareness programme.

Research update from the South Pacific Humpback Research Project.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES #6

SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday 29th September

SAINEHA HIGH SCHOOL - MORMOM HIGH SCHOOL NEIAFU

entire student body approx. 400 students

ages 11 - 18

principal - Samisen

Trainers - Mel, Filipe, Olive

Filipe presented in Tongan and English

Slides behaviours, mother calf, feeding

Overheads - feeding, migration, anatomy

Visual aids - life size baby

400 kids mimicking the whale song, first one side of the gymnasium then the other side the girls doing the high notes and the boys doing the low notes - this sounded their appreciation.

Friday September

TAI LULU HIGH SCHOOL

entire student body of 300 students

10 teachers

Trainers - Mel, Filipe

Filipe presented in Tongan

Slides behaviours, mother calf, feeding

Overheads - feeding, migration, anatomy

Visual aids - life size baby

Luisa's nephew Nehuma said ' of all the things you showed us I remember the big tail and the life size baby most'.



Thursday 23rd September

VAVA'U HIGH SCHOOL

approx. 150 students

teacher Sandra Gros

Trainers - Mick and Mike

outside presentation

life size visual aids

playing of whale song

ON BOARD WHALE WATCH ON 'MELINDA'

CHANEL COLLEGE

10 students from Form V science and Biology class, one teacher Fotu

Skipper - Nis, Crew - Soape and Owner - Christy

Trainers - Olive, Mel

No whales sighted but the music exchange between trainers and students built a bridge so the whale information and the marine environment was openly received.

Saturday 18th September

ON BOARD WHALE WATCH ON 'WHALE SONG'

CHANEL HIGH SCHOOL

21 students, 6 teachers

Skipper - Ongo, Crew - Anoufo

Trainer - Mel

This was a significant day for skipper Ongo who has been a teacher at Chanel

He also had onboard his two daughters, one who is a teacher at Chanel.

First time they had ever been on the water the students had observed a presentation at school before coming out on the water and this was their opportunity to apply what they had learnt at school to the real world of the whales. It was a significant day because the boat crew and passengers were all Tongan. Anoufo was able to teach about the whales to them in Tongan.

The observations onboard this day of the passengers attempting to swim with the whales was that for inexperienced swimmers there was no flotation or fins available, a concern as more than one boat had swimmers in the water and in the trainers opinion there were too many swimmers in the water at one time.

Also observed as many as five boats approaching a whale within 300 metres.

When the whale watch boats are with a whale there is close compliance with the guidelines, it seems it is practical, it seems to work for the operators.

When private boats enter the picture there is a perceived need to posture in close proximity to the whale, to communicate the first right to watch or swim with the whales.



WHALE WATCH ON BOARD 'MELINDA'

VAVA'U HIGH

10 students, 2 teachers (Nori)

Trainer - Kirsty (research project)

Skipper - Nis, Crew - Soape

Thursday 16th September

CHANEL HIGH SCHOOL

Trainers - Mike Donogue, Mel Rice

21 form V science students

teachers - Melanie Maclou

Computer presentations on the science of the research project including the whaling history this was a science class connection with endangered status, reproduction rate, abundance estimate, anatomy.

Mel used visual aids to teach anatomy, comparing humans to the anatomy of the whale, describing the life cycle and comparing it to land mammals.

Also taught migration, life cycle, life size.

18 Form V Maths Students

Trainers - Mike Donogue, Mel Rice

Principal and science teacher Automalo Afuhia + math teacher Fotu fa'asolo

Mike gave a computer power point presentation making connections with maths and the natural history of the whale e.g., weight, length of a whale, migration distances, weight gain and loss, feeding statistics.

VAVA'U HIGH SCHOOL

Geography Class

Trainers - Mike, Mel

11 Form VI students

teacher Nori Blanks

Mike poer point computer presentation on the science of the research project including the history of whaling.

Geography class Mel taught the concept of migratory animals all over the world.

Mel used a globe as a visual aid to demonstrate the migration from polar feeding grounds along coastlines towards equator. made comparison between north and south hemispheres. as a class brainstormed theories on how the whales migrate such long distances.

Saturday 11th September

VAVA'U HIGH SCHOOL

10 students, 2 teachers

Mike Donoghue

Mike computer presentation on the science of the research project including the history of whaling.

