

## June 2009 Wildlife Report

Here's the June report about Lifeforce wildlife protection work and public awareness campaign to show all that we only can truly appreciate and learn about wildlife by not keeping them in aquariums and zoos.

The stormy weather gave us some time to replace orca watching duties with orca display work. Over the last weekend in June Lifeforce fixed up the Orca Center in Lighthouse Marine Park with new photographs and educational information for the upcoming Canada Day and July 4th events. A photo walkthrough is at <http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org/newsitem.php?id=109> . For 15 years our volunteer service has maintained the Orca Center and our land-based Orca Trails programs. Orca Trails information includes alerting park visitors to the times the orcas will pass by. From land they can see many orcas who are often a only a few hundred feet off shore.

On **Saturday June 27th** we would need special night vision equipment to see the orcas pass Point Roberts in the dark early morning heading south. They had been off the South Arm on Friday June 26th at approx. 2000. The whale watch companies found them at 1000 off Lawrence Point heading south down Rosario Strait. At 1410 the leaders were off Cattle Point, San Juan Island. There has been times that Lifeforce has timed night time passes by the listening to a marvelous chorus of blows. a wonderful beach experience.

Two Barn swallows took their first flight around the park in Point Roberts. One waited a bit nut eventually wanted to fly like the others.



Contemplating that first flight

On **Sunday June 28th** only a good set of binoculars would give park visitors glimpses of the whale watch fleet surrounding orcas heading towards the Westshore coal docks to the Fraser River at approx. 1600. They were quite active with some breaching as they pass the South Arm of the Fraser at approx. 1800.

Just off the parking lot in Lighthouse Marine park an eagle drew quite a crowd as he sat on a piling waiting for lunch to swim by.



Eagle with bullhead in talons

Later in the day a deer was at the front entrance of the park.



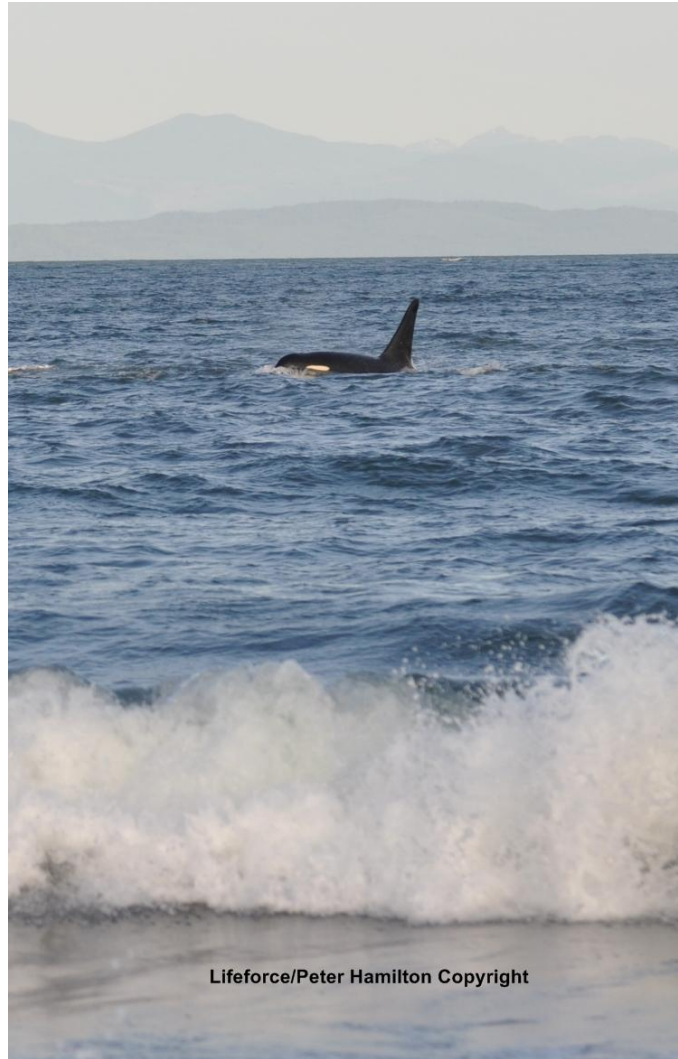
Deer at Lighthouse Marine Park

And, while there is usually one eagle perched on the Danger sign at the entrance to the Point Roberts Marina, today I saw another one sitting on the light.



Eagles at Point Roberts Marina

On **Monday June 29th** at 0625 a few orca orcas passed Point Roberts heading Southeast. They were difficult to identify due to frigid strong winds whipping up 4 foot waves. They were just travelling through with scarce surfacings then long dives. We usually see individual orcas doing several surfacings as they approach and round the park point. It is possible that these were the trailers since I'm quite sure that there was a breach and some blows off in the distant rough waters earlier this morning. Sometimes groups will travel pass with a separation time of over one hour.



L Pod member passing Point Roberts

The following is the original text for an article that I recently wrote for the July All Point Bulletin. Words cannot describe plight of orcas who continue to be harassed by boats as we see in this very disturbing photo that was taken recently off Point Roberts. A series of photos shows the ongoing pursuit of orcas in violation of legislation. This and other disturbances have been reported to authorities since it is clear that the industry is failing to police themselves. I hope you will write to Commerce Secretary Gary Locke to get him to increase orca protection funding to WDFW.

## Wild at the Point: 50% Less Protection for Orcas

*By Peter Hamilton, Lifeforce Founder*

In spite of campaigns to get more funding to protect orcas there has been a recent major blow to the orcas. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will have to cut their whale patrols by approximately 50% in 2009. WDFW has historically received funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) for "Outreach and Education Patrols". NOAA Headquarters cut the NOAA Protected Resources' budget severely for some unknown reason. This will leave WDFW struggling to enforce orca protection legislation and the orcas struggling to survive.

When a species is less than 1000 the population's gene pool is severely restricted and they are extremely vulnerable. This could lead to extinction. The local Southern Community of orcas numbers approximately 85 members. It appears inevitable that they will be gone within 50 years or sooner if hit with continue food loss, an oil spill and other human impacts.

In 2008, the Lifeforce petition was sent to Governor Gregoire. Signees urged Governor Gregoire to direct enforcement agencies to enforce marine mammal protection provisions and to establish a 1/2 mile voluntary boat exclusion zone in waters surrounding Point Roberts. As of June 15, 2008 it is illegal to be in the vicinity of orcas within 100 meters. If orcas are heading towards you must slowly move out of their way.

In February 2009 Lifeforce followed up by releasing a report entitled "Contact: In Pursuit of Orcas". In 2008 Lifeforce gathered conclusive evidence of flagrant disregard for the well being of orcas and the laws by whale watch companies. Pleasure boats imitate these illegal practises. The report is at [http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org/files/INPURSUITORCASJAN2009\\_sm](http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org/files/INPURSUITORCASJAN2009_sm).

Photographic evidence collected by Lifeforce led to fines against one Victoria-based whale watch company.



Whale Watch Boats driving too close to orcas (June 2009)

For the third year Governor Gregoire declared June 2009 as “Orca Awareness Month” in Washington State. It’s a great gesture but putting up enforcement money to increase WDFW boat time on the water is needed more than a proclamation hanging on a wall and feel-good events.

Please write to former Washington Governor and present US Commerce Secretary Gary Locke. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is under the Department of Commerce and they have provided the historic funding to WDFW for orca protection. Urge Secretary Locke to provide sufficient funds to WDFW. His email is: [TheSec@doc.gov](mailto:TheSec@doc.gov)

Orcas sightings off Point Roberts had been scarce since Memorial Day but from June 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> all were treated to daily visits. For many months J pod was elusive and there were only 9 from L pod and 6 from K pod. On June 21<sup>st</sup> the rest of L and K pods met up



with them in Swanson Channel. It took them approximately 18 hours to travel down from Campbell River, BC as they were sighted on Saturday evening. After socializing for a couple of hours they all headed towards Point Roberts. Many were seen as the sun set over Lighthouse Marine Park.

Orcas passing Lighthouse Marine Park (June 2009). Lifeforce Copyright

Other wildlife sightings included an Eastern Cottontail who has taken up cruising the park beach for this beach bunny’s veggie picnics. The barn swallows have a second nest by the park washroom entrance and sometimes startle people as they fly back and forth to catch insects. So beware of this bird crossing.



And while other sea birds have migrated

some Rhinoceros Auklets and Harlequins ducks were seen off the park. The Downy Woodpeckers, with the males distinguished by red head markings, weren’t tapping Morse

code at telephone poles on Marine Drive - they were pecking for bugs. A Whimbrel with the long, down curved bill quickly flew over the park. Also an Eastern Gray Squirrel has found a buffet at the bird feeders on Gulf Road.

### **Respect and Enjoy Wildlife**

So let's all remember Point Roberts is a bit of paradise. While we marvel at the wonders of wildlife please don't approach, feed or try to touch. They may look cute but they can cause severe injuries. Junk food can kill them. So respect and enjoy them from a distance.

Lifeforce Wildlife Reports, Nature Moments videos, and Wildpeace photographs are available at [www.lifeforcefoundation.org](http://www.lifeforcefoundation.org).



Gray Squirrel. Lifeforce Copyright

*Note: This is the second article about wildlife on and around the point. Look for more Wildlife Reports in the coming months or call Lifeforce at 604-649-5258 for current information. Donations are greatly appreciated and can be sent to Lifeforce, Box 121, Point Roberts, 98281 or Box 3117, Vancouver, BC V6B 3X6.*