

Lifeforce Marine Life Report – Victoria Day Weekend

The BC Victoria Day long weekend was full of interesting surprises with a Minke whale, Harbour porpoises, a barking sea lion and J pod (with some confusing activities). And there was even some deer walking down a Point Robert's road and later cutting through a yard with a No Trespassing sign – I guess they thought it meant humans.



May 15: Harbour porpoise were of Lighthouse Marine Park for most of the day. Harbour porpoises off Point Roberts have been commonly seen since at least 1993 when we started our Marine Life Programs. What is more frequent are the observations of lunging behaviour while feeding and active socializing. Observers can see nearly the whole body above the water. There appears to be lots of feed for them. The gulls, cormorants and other birds are very vocal when they land and try to get scraps when the seals get a salmon. Seals are in the same areas where the porpoises are found. Perhaps the porpoises leave some extras but it is more likely part of the seals' meal.

I would like to add to the other reports of the number of Harbour porpoises. People should keep in mind that when Harbour porpoise are feeding they will surface every 2 to 5 seconds. While travelling they will surface 8 times a minute. What may look like 40 may actually be considerably less. At the park site I counted approximately 12 with one mom and baby. There does appear to be many other groups in the Southern Georgia Strait waters.



May 16: Friday was one of those days. Js past East Point at approx. 2PM Heading towards Point Roberts. So I told the campers at Lighthouse Marine that Js will pass by. When I went to get needed gas the gas dock was closed because of a gas leak. So 1 hour later I was off. But now the boat alarm went off. Just a false alarm but made me wait near home for them to approach. But by 2000 no sign of them so I gave up. I didn't go back to park because the waiting campers may have had the tar and feathers ready for me.

May 17: On Saturday Js were off SJI and out of the general area for our Lifewatch Boater Awareness Program so it was local education day for boaters at Point Roberts. Boaters had to be advised that they must not drive through the porpoises. Harbour porpoise will avoid boats. They will not ride the wake of boats like the Dall's porpoise and Pacific White-sided dolphins. People can watch them from the beach and if they must go out in their boat then they should shut down and float. When I was photographing them they would pass by with 20 feet of the Lifeforce boat that was floating back and forth with the tides/currents.

The Harbour porpoises eventually left because of the numerous boats speeding about. The Canadian Coast Guard hovercraft also added to the noise and threat of collision when they passed directly through the porpoise's playground.

There were also boaters that would drive the flocks of sea birds. Many years ago we reported two older guys who were using a sling shot to try to hit birds and seals. Some species fall under

the Migratory Bird Act and the Canadian Wildlife Service even reprimanded them. We will find out what the current regs are re: harassing gulls, cormorants and Western grebes.



While I was waiting to hear if Js were getting closer at 1550 a “huge porpoise” appeared? Was the sun getting to me or was it a flashback of the False Killer Whale that travelled here from 1993 to 2003? Nope it was a lone Minke whale Heading West. I have never seen one off the Point. What a thrill.

May 18: Sunday was the J pod confusion. At 5AM a report came into our Hotline about orcas Heading North off Point Roberts. At 0645 I saw the end of some orcas moving fast Heading South off the Point. So did I miss Js? No. At 0845 a large number of orcas were also Heading South. This time some breaches and some 100 feet off shore thrilled the campers who I informed about the pending passing (as part of our Orca Trails land-based whale watching program).



I went out in 4 foot seas to see if there were more than Js, did Js split up or was the first pass Transients? **While Watch Watch Companies first found Js at Alden Bank at 1145 I was miles north of them with other Js. They all went into Rosario and I left them spread out in calm waters just East of Java Rocks at 1645.**

Boater problems included some companies still blocking path ways and a Foss tug driving over some at Lummi Island. Our test of using a construction Stop/Slow paddle was successful in stopping a speeding boat following the tug through the group of orcas.



Lifeforce/Peter Hamilton
Copyright



Lifeforce/Peter Hamilton
Copyright

Orcas surfacing where tug had just passed.

Note: Lifeforce emailed a notification of guideline violations and has a received a response from Foss Tugs. They will be reviewing the matter with the tug Captains and will send us a report.

At night time we received a report of a barking sea lion swimming pass Point Roberts' park.

May 19: 1100 – J pod was heading east off Iceberg (I finally get a day off to take the boat out for an oil change and some fixing).

Lifeforce will be back out for the US Memorial Day holiday. So enjoy the orcas and other wildlife but do not disturb them. People are watching.

For Freedom,

Peter Hamilton

Lifewatch Boater Awareness Program

Lifeforce Whale and Dolphin Hotline

604.649.5258

lifeforcesociety@hotmail.com

www.lifeforcefoundation.org

Help Protect Marine Wildlife

Lifeforce is a registered Non-Profit Society Registered under the Society Act of BC since 1981 and Lifeforce Ocean Friends is incorporated in WA since 1997. ***Your important donations and memberships fund these important programs. So please Help Lifeforce Help Wildlife.***