



Marineland Right Whale Survey Project Newsletter

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Reserve the Date – End-of-Year Party

Our pot luck end-of-year party will be Saturday, March 25, at the Whitney Hall conference center of the University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory - across the street from the new Marineland facility. Party starts at 6:00 PM. Bring your favorite appetizer, main course or dessert to share! We will provide plates, eating utensils, napkins, cups, soft drinks and the evening's entertainment. It's the social event of the year!

Marineland Hosting the AirCam

The plane we are using to survey, respond to sightings, and photograph whales is currently based at Marineland. If you have not yet seen the plane, come on over and have a look. Also, we can notify your team leader for time of takeoff so you can see the plane in action.

Update on Sightings

As has happened in most years – the sightings run hot and cold. We may have sightings on back-to-back days followed by several days with none. This has been the pattern for this season. So far this year, we have had 24 confirmed sightings. Noteworthy were two mother/calf pairs on February 14, and a group of five probable juveniles on February 18. To date, we have had five mothers with calves in our area. Of these, #1503 has been seen four times. The last sighting by the shore spotters was on 17 February. On this day, the ocean in our area appeared empty – very empty. The morning spotters reported no sightings. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission survey plane had passed through in the morning, and our AirCam flew through twice in the afternoon. Nothing. Then around sunset the phone rang. Ted Gum, Marilyn Cox, and Carolyn Harcourt had whales out front of the Surf Club. Vonnie Carlett called Joy with the same whales. Jim and Sheila responded. In fading light they confirmed a mother/calf pair playing and heading slowly south. Where had they been all day? How was it that they suddenly appeared? This and many other questions are what make our work interesting.

Website

Many have inquired about a website. We are getting closer to having it ready, and hope to have information and photos up in a week or two. We will keep you posted.

Tattoo Lesions

We are always learning. The whales that Joy photographed on 18 February off Ormond displayed unusual marks, grayish rings with dark centers that somewhat resembled doughnuts. Some whales had numerous marks over the majority of their bodies; others had just a scattered few. Researchers at the New England Aquarium tell us these are probably "tattoo lesions." We are inquiring further about what these are and how they are caused.