

# RESCUE , REHABILITATION AND RELEASE OF A WILD ORPHANED KILLER WHALE CALF IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST



**Brent Norberg, Lynne Barre, Janet Whaley, Teri Rowles, Marilyn Joyce, Jeff Foster, Clint Wright, Steve Jeffries and Des Maynard**



**NOAA Fisheries**





**First reported**

**January 14, 2002 by local  
researcher**

**Observed following  
Fauntleroy/Vashon Island  
ferry route in Puget Sound**

**Identification- A73**

**Northern Resident A Pod**

**Photo ID**

**Dialect**

**Natal origin - A4 pod**

**Mom A45 (last seen 2000)**

**Grandmother A24 (alive)**



Photo by Michael Kundu

**Initial Assessment**  
**Feb - May 2002**  
**Behavior monitoring**  
**Medical evaluation**

**Reports from**  
**NMFS & State biologists**  
**Researchers**  
**Medical team**  
**NGOs**  
**Public**



## Case History

**Solitary animal**

**Dermal disease**

**Underweight**

**Ketotic breath**



**Limited range**

**Abnormal behavior**

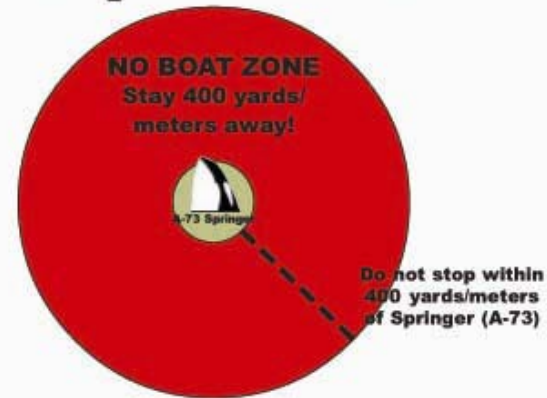
**Increased interactions  
with humans/vessels**

# Stewardship Program

&

# Data Collection

## Please Help the Orphaned Orca



## Boaters Stay Away

Springer (A-73) is now attracted to stopped and idling boats and swims around and underneath them for some time before moving off. This is of concern because she is very young and learning these behaviors could lead to injury or create an unnatural dependency upon people. Springer may lose the chance to return to her own kind.

### To Protect Springer:

- Boaters should avoid the area where Springer has been sighted.
- Transiting boaters should move slowly and give Springer a wide safety zone.
- Boaters should not stop/drift within 400 yards<sup>1</sup>.
- Kayakers should avoid the area entirely<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Stopping and/or drifting at the standard 100 yard guideline is not enough to protect this baby whale.

<sup>2</sup> Springer has shown aggressive behavior towards floating objects and may be dangerous to paddlers.



[www.whalemuseum.com](http://www.whalemuseum.com)



# STAKEHOLDERS



## Orphan Orca Fund

*Help bring Springer home!*

© Mark Sears

Seven conservation organizations have established the Orphan Orca Fund to provide a single opportunity for the public to support the reintroduction of A 73, Springer, to her pod in Canada.

American Cetacean Society/ Puget Sound Chapter	<a href="http://www.acspugetsound.org">www.acspugetsound.org</a>
Earth Island Institute	<a href="http://www.earthisland.org">www.earthisland.org</a>
Friends of the San Juans	<a href="http://www.sanjuans.org">www.sanjuans.org</a>
Orca Alliance	<a href="http://www.orcaconservancy.org">www.orcaconservancy.org</a>
Orca Conservancy	<a href="http://www.pugetsound.org">www.pugetsound.org</a>
People For Puget Sound	<a href="http://www.whale-museum.org">www.whale-museum.org</a>
The Whale Museum	

The Orphan Orca Fund will **only** fund activities that support A73's repatriation to her natal waters. **No** funds will be used to support any activities associated with preparing A73 for removal to an aquarium or marine park.

Send your donation to:

**Orphan Orca Fund  
Islanders Bank  
P.O. Box 909  
Friday Harbor, WA 98250**

## Please Donate

**NOAA Fisheries decision to Rescue A73 announced  
May 24, 2002**

# Community Participation Was Important

Orca Alliance  
People for Puget Sound  
American Cetacean Society  
Friends of the San Juans  
Orca Conservancy  
Project SeaWolf  
Earth Island Institute  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Delta One International Agency  
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution  
Woodland Park Zoo  
Sea World, Inc.  
Six Flags Marine World  
The Whale Museum  
Nichols Brother Boat Builders  
Cypress Islands, Inc.  
Manson Construction  
U.S. Navy  
Northwest Cascade  
Underwater Sports  
Washington State Ferries  
Diametrics Medical, Inc.  
Ocean Systems, Inc.



# Preparations for Rescue

Rescue team assembled

On the water desensitization sessions

Vessels

Rescuers

Tools (tail rope, stretcher)





Rescue Day

June 13, 2002

**A73 engaged  
at the side of  
rescue boat**



# Capture Video

Click [here](#) to view video (WMV, 17.0 MB, 1:12)

# Transport & Sampling

**Monitor Behavior and Respirations**

**Collect Blood, Urine, Fecal & Breath Samples**

**Swab Blowhole**

**Collect Measurements**



**Weight:  
1,240 lbs**

**Length:  
11 feet long**

Barge time donated by Cypress Island, Inc.

# NOAA Manchester Research Station



**Floating net pen  
40 ft. X 40 ft. X 12 ft.**

## Introduction to floating net pen animal care staff in corners



Stretcher on loan from Point  
Defiance Zoo and Aquarium



'Everything went as if the animal knew what to do'

# Capture goes smoothly

A lasso a sling

METRO EDITION

25¢

# The Seattle Times

[www.seattletimes.com](http://www.seattletimes.com)

25¢ IN KING, SNOHOMISH, PIERCE  
COUNTIES AND BAINBRIDGE ISLAND  
50¢ IN ISLAND, KITSAP AND  
THURSTON COUNTIES • 75¢ ELSEWHERE



## A WHALE OF A RESCUE

*Capture of orphaned orca  
goes smoothly off Vashon Island*



CHERYL HATCH / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The orca peers out of her holding pen after her transfer.



# Minimizing human interactions

- Shade cloth around net pen
- 50 foot tube for introducing live salmon to pen
- Remote video monitoring
- Medication in live fish



# Feeding

**Live salmon (Atlantic)**

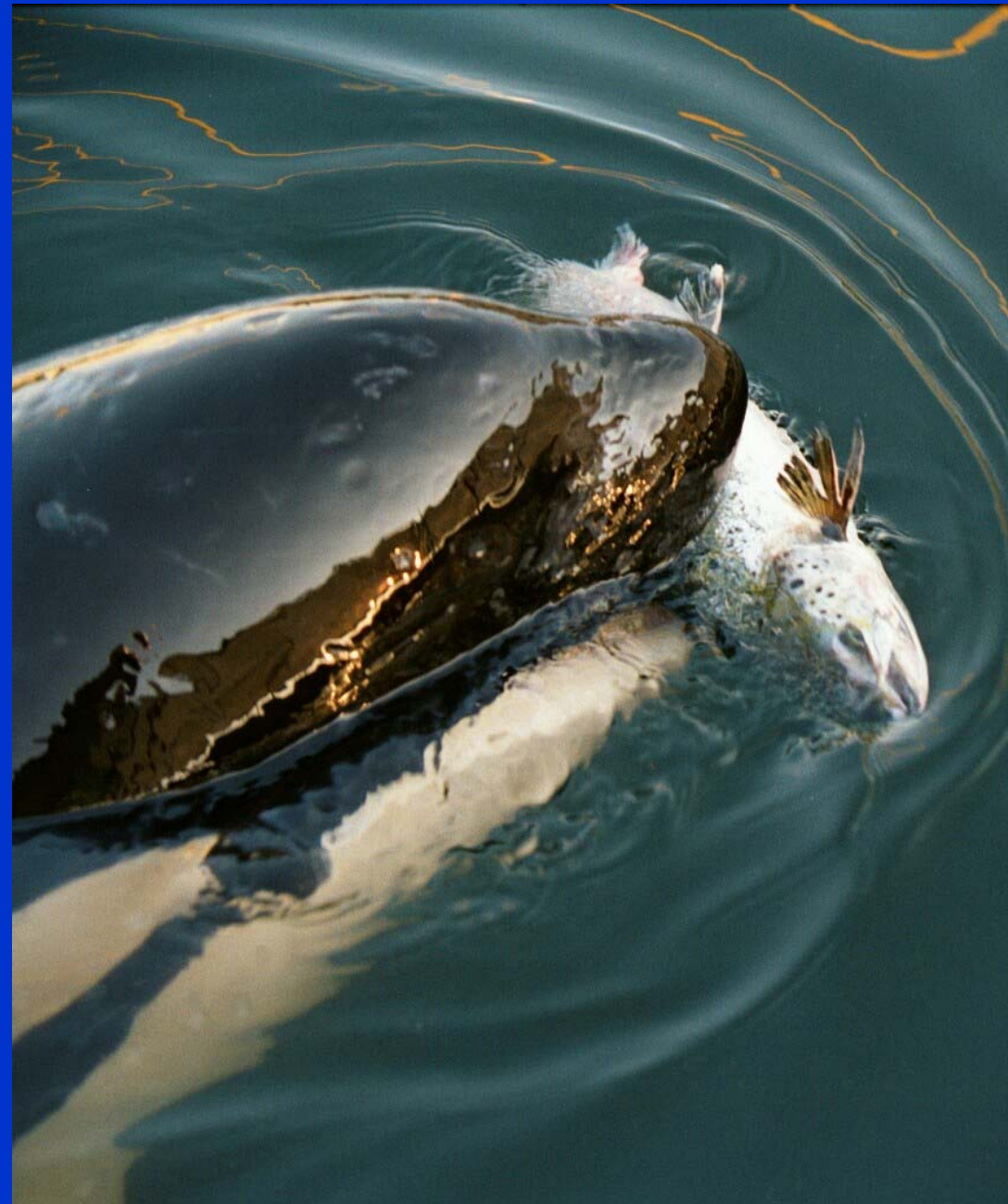
**Variable schedule**

**# of fish**

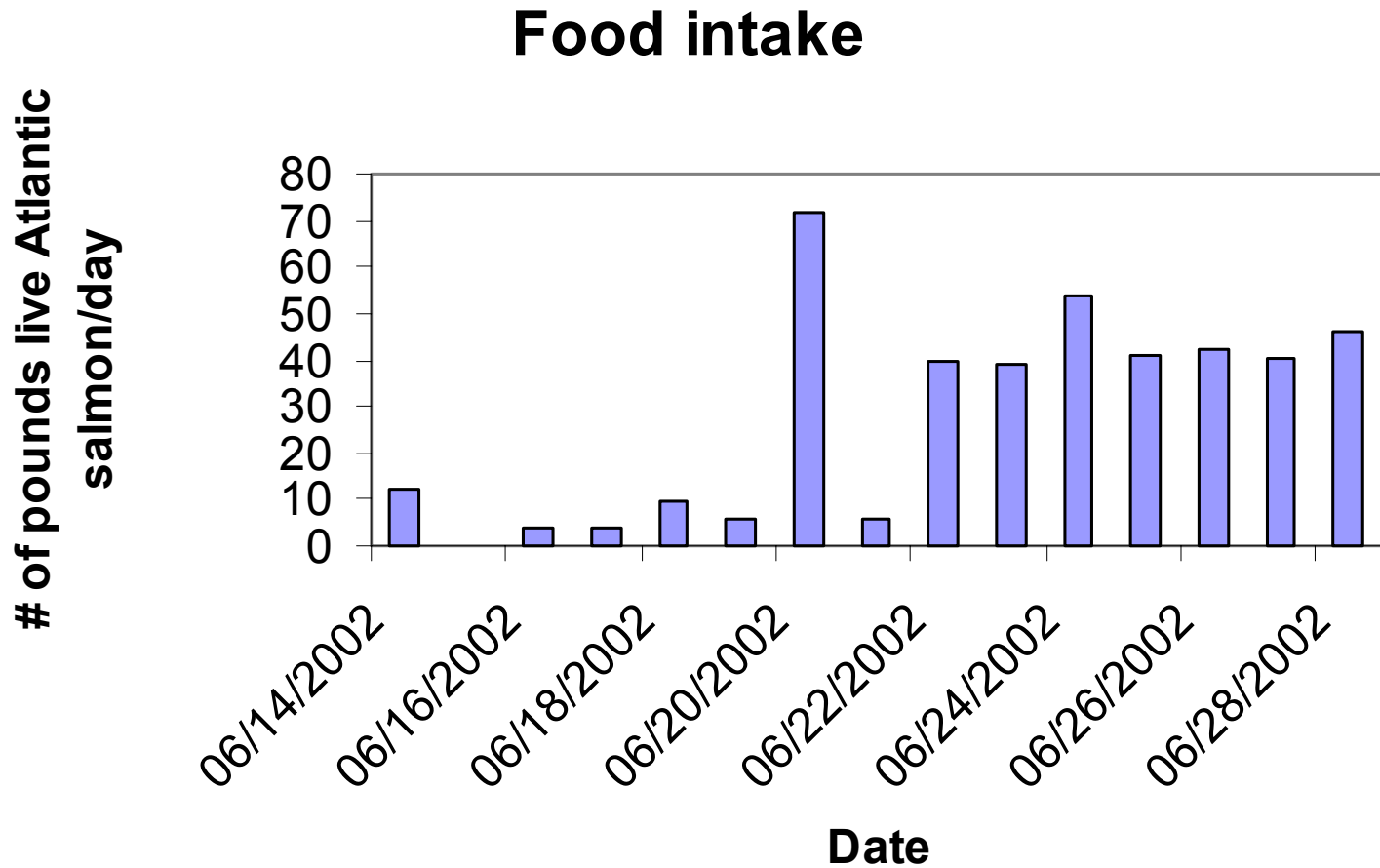
**Size of fish**

**Time of day**





# Beginning June 23, 2002 50-60 lbs salmon/day



# Remote Video Monitoring

1 overhead pan & tilt camera

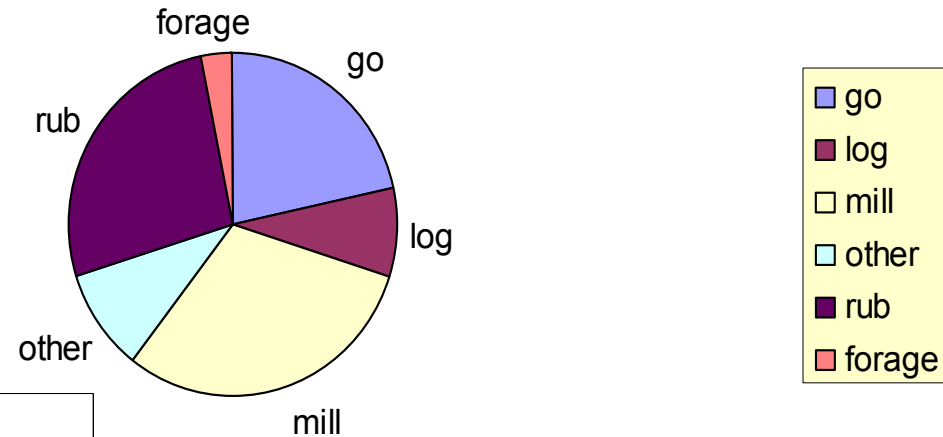
4 underwater cameras



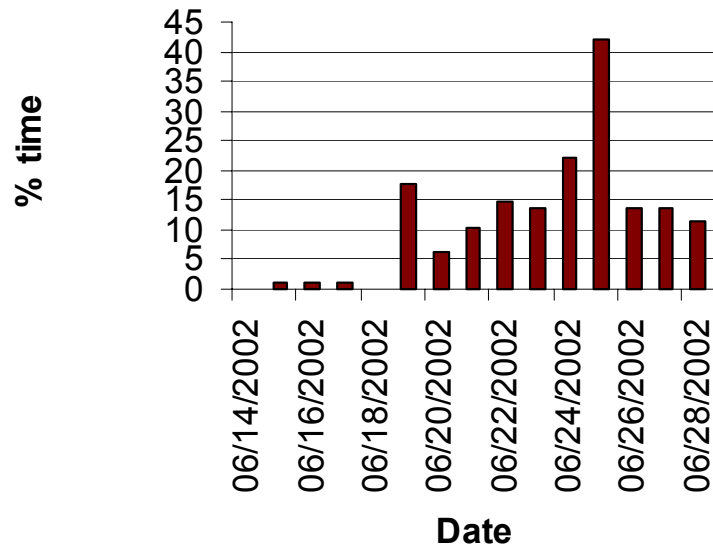
Cameras on loan from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and Ocean Systems, Inc.

# Behavioral Assessment

## A73 Behavior June 15-30



### Logging behavior



**Ethogram developed**

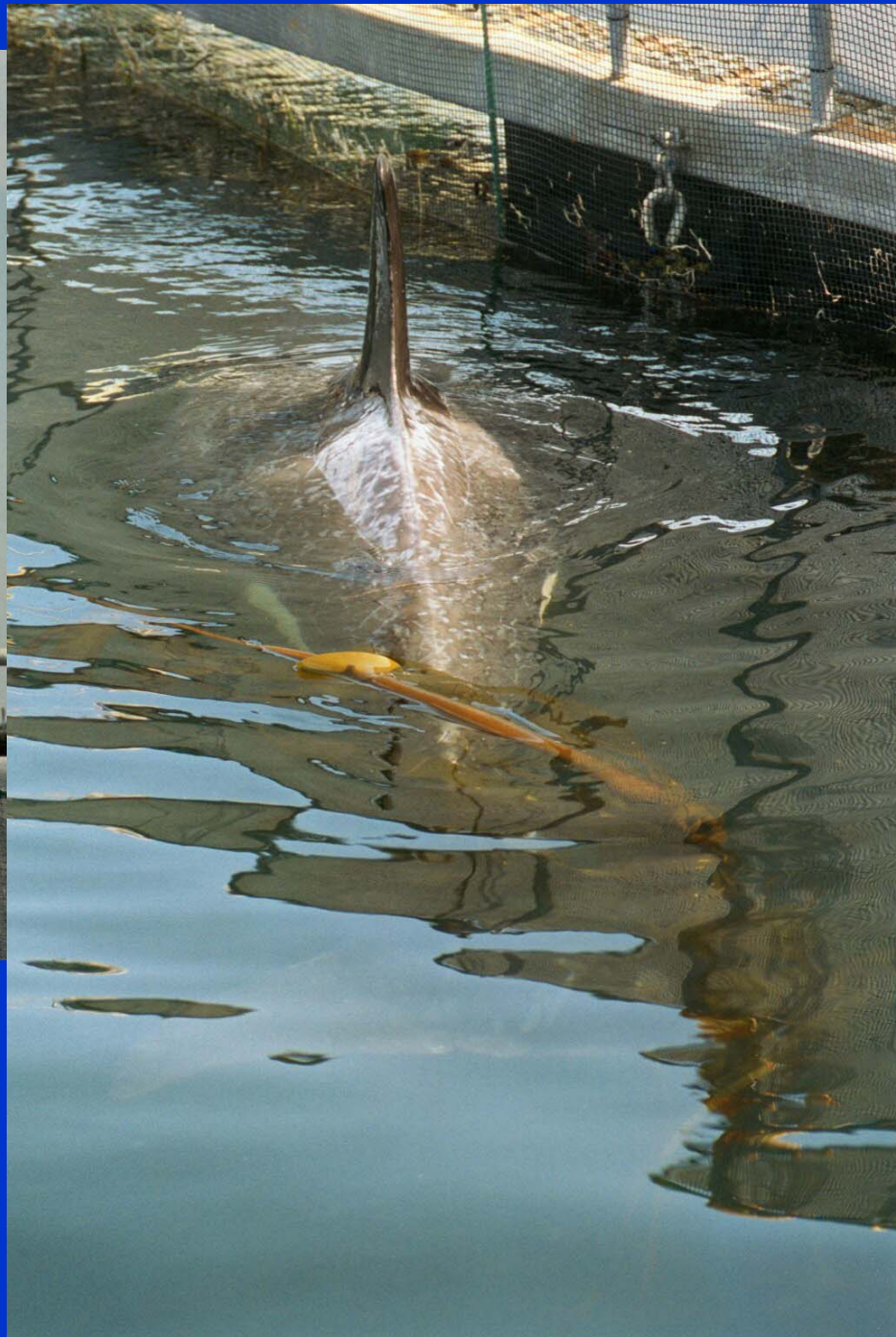
**Behavior recorded every  
15 minutes - 24/7**

# Enrichment Using Natural & Novel Items



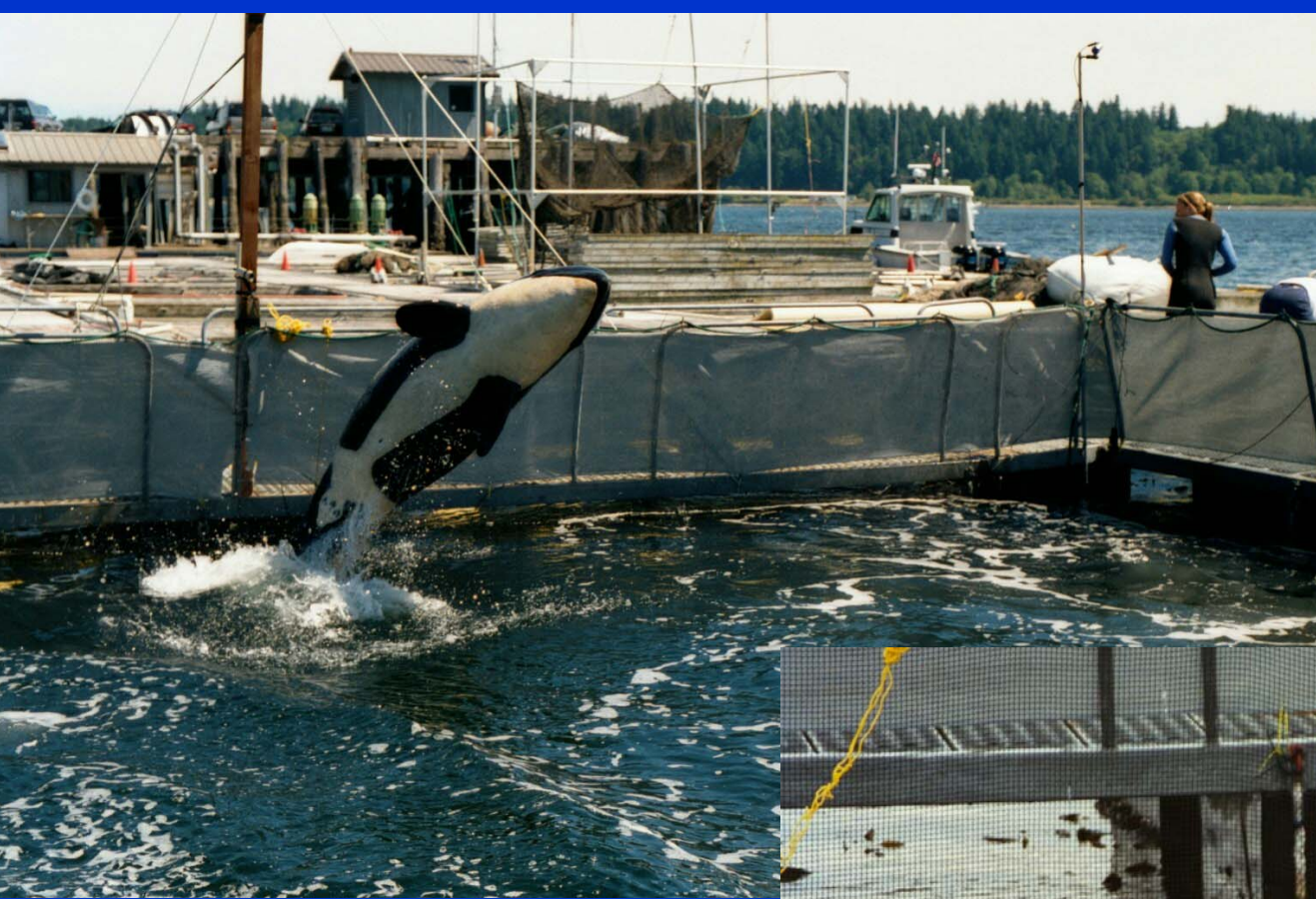
**Logs**  
**Live fish**  
**Crabs**





**Kelp  
Ice**





**Water hose**





**Some handling  
was required**



# Transport Day

## July 13, 2002



WEST SOUND

# SUN

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 2002 ■ 50 CENTS

WWW.THESUNLINK.COM

## Bush gets tough on corporate scandals

NATION&WORLD ■ B1

## Health district adds businesses to its EnviroStar program

INSIDE ■ A3



Got the blues?  
Hope so

FOOD ■ D1

THE NORTHWEST'S BEST COMMUNITY PAPER

**SPRINGER**

# Orphan orca will hop a boat home Friday

■ *The female killer whale will return to Canadian waters after recuperating at her temporary Manchester home.*

By **Chris Barron**  
Sun Staff

Springer's six-month sabbatical in Puget Sound waters will be over Friday.

The orphaned female orca will leave her temporary Manchester pen and head to Canadian waters via a high-speed catamaran.

The hope is that the killer whale — officially designated as A-73 — will eventually rejoin her family just north of Vancouver Island in the

coming weeks, Canadian officials said Tuesday.

"There are no assurances," said Marilyn Joyce of Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans. "We can only provide this opportunity."

The orca, now deemed in good health after a few shaky months, is not a risk to other killer whales, Joyce said.

"Our foremost priority is the health of the northern population," Joyce said. "The team has determined that A-73 does not pose any

known threat to the pod.

"We also want what's best for Springer and want to make sure she is healthy enough to live without human intervention the rest of her life."

Over the past week, Canadian marine officials examined blood samples, urine tests and skin biopsies to determine the state of Springer's health.

The clear consensus is that the 2-year-old, 1,200-pound killer whale, who is eating nearly 70 pounds of food per day, is in good shape and will be able to endure the daylong catamaran trip Friday.

See **SPRINGER** on A2



Sun staff

# Weight Gain

~ 150 lbs  
after 30 days



Crane courtesy of Manson Construction  
Transport box on loan from Six Flags  
Marine World



Catalina Jet transport vessel donated by Nichols Brothers Boat Builders



## Transport

### Monitoring

- Respirations (15 minutes every hour)
- Body position
- Water temperature
- Water quality
- 10 hour trip

# Home Waters

Hanson Island  
B.C., Canada



Floating net pen  
stocked with  
live salmon (Pacific)

# Local community and First Nations welcome A73 home







**Lifted onto barge for short transport to new pen**



**Active in  
new net  
pen**

**Overnight  
acoustic  
contact  
with  
other  
whales**

# Release July 14, 2002

## 3 Kent men on missing plane

Wreckage spotted in Alaska mountains may be their aircraft

BY LEWIS KAMB  
P-I reporter

As paratroopers prepared to descend on plane wreckage spotted in rugged Alaskan mountains late last night, family and friends of three missing South King County men anxiously awaited word of life or death.

The three men, whose names were being withheld last night by Kent city officials, had boarded a chartered floatplane bound for a remote Alaskan fishing village Friday as part of sport-fishing excursion organized through the city's Senior Activity Center.

In all, 10 Kent-area seniors participated in the trip — with seven of them boarding one flight, and the three men boarding another

SEE PLANE, A2

## Bush shifts Head Start focus to the ABCs

'We were quite sure . . . she'd go charging off — and she did'

## Springer swims free



# Release Video

Click [here](#) to view video (WMV, 7.0 MB, 0:33)

**Initial Monitoring by DFO & Vancouver Aquarium**  
**Suction Cup Tags – VHF, Satellite, TDR**  
**Visual Observations**

**Long-term**  
**Whale Watch**  
**Network**  
**Orcalab**

**Last Sighting**  
**October 6, 2002**



Photo by L. Barrett-Lennard

A73 (Springer) with A13

July 25, 2003



Photo by John Ford

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program

NOAA Manchester Research Station

Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Orphan Orca Fund

Orca Alliance

People for Puget Sound

American Cetacean Society

Friends of the San Juans

Orca Conservancy

Project SeaWolf

Earth Island Institute

Environmental Protection Agency

Delta One International Agency

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Vancouver Aquarium

Sea World, Inc.

Six Flags Marine World

The Whale Museum

Nichols Brother Boat Builders

Cypress Islands, Inc.

Manson Construction

U.S. Navy

Northwest Cascade

Underwater Sports

Washington State Ferries

Diametrics Medical, Inc.

Ocean Systems, Inc.

Woodland Park Zoo

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**Animal Care:** Stephen Claussen, Jim Horton, Brian O'Neill, Peter Noah, Jen Schorr, Greg Schorr, Steve Sinelli, John Nightingale, Brian Sheehan, Vancouver Aquarium Staff

**Veterinarians:** Jim McBain, David Huff, Pete Schroeder, Janet Whaley, Teri Rowles, Stephen Raverty

**Fisheries & Oceans:** John Ford, Graeme Ellis, Peter Ross

**WDFW:** Dyanna Lambourn, Tammy Schmidt

**NOAA:** Amy Sloan, Carrie Hubbard, Bob Lohn, Joe Scordino, Brad Hanson, Brian Gorman, Janet Sears, Brad Vinish, James Hackett

