

January 14, 2014



Hello (and a *Megaptera novaeangliae*-an wave from our whale friend in Puerto Vallarta!)

I am writing to you (at last!) from Barra de Potosi, where we just had a great first day on the water. We saw two whales breaching, a distant tail and a blow, and detected whales singing at one point, as well.

### **Whale School Rocked**

Pablo Mendizabal and I spent 5 days in Puerto Vallarta on the water last week. I refined my fluke photo identification and rematch techniques and learned a lot about optimal boat operation around whales and humpback whale behavior from Deep Blue Conservancy.



*You can see in these two pictures how different whale flukes are from each other. This is why it is so important that we use them to photo ID whales by their tails to tell them apart!*

### **Bonus Scientists!**

We have two more illustrious scientists coming to spend time with us on the water this February, named Mari Smultea and Dave Steckler. Mari is one of the most seasoned whale researchers I have ever met, with more than 12,000 hours

of line transect studies under her belt and a master's degree in humpback whale behavior. Dave is an ex-Microsoft software engineer who is now dedicating himself to developing software for whale researchers which we can use to enter our data onto a map and get a clear understanding of whale distribution and abundance. They are also super nice people. I am so happy that they will be here for two weeks at the end of February to bring the kind of rigor and accuracy we need to our study to gain grant support in the future from scientific organizations.

### **Here Comes the Singing Biologist...**

Our first biologist and educator, Andy Wex, will be arriving on February 1 for a week and will be spending time on the water, in the classroom and singing whale themed songs and taking some of you for science walks while he is here.

### **My, What a Busy Week**

This week, in addition to spending 30 hours on the water (8:30 AM - 2:30 PM daily) I am meeting with the local fishing cooperatives to share information about the project with them on Wednesday at 3:30 PM, giving an update in person to the local foreign community about the project at Chula Vida on Saturday at 4 PM and heading over to Troncones to meet with the community there to discuss how we can work together to extend the project to their region and get a more complete picture of this population of whales starting next winter.

We hope to have established a rhythm on the water by the end of this week and next week will begin inviting local fishermen, ecotour guides and project supporters to come out on the water with us for a day of whale study. It will be a lot of fun.

### **If You See Something, Say Something**

If you are located in Mexico in our area and see whales, I'd love to hear from you! **If you spot whales, please send me a text message at 755-127-1583** and let

me know how many whales you spotted, how you detected them (blow, splash, body part), where you saw them (with as much precision as possible), what the date and time it was when you first spotted them and how long you watched them for. If it is clear what they were doing (was it a mother with a calf? A group of whales? Was one or a few of them breaching, finslapping or tail lobbing?) I'd love to know that, too. You can also e-mail me at [k@kpetunia.com](mailto:k@kpetunia.com) with this information. This will help us build a map of promising areas to run population and distribution studies of over the coming years. Crowd sourced science works!

Thanks again for your support in helping this project to become a reality. It feels like the most right and good thing in the world to be here, in the village, beginning this work and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be of service to the whales, the people in this village and the planet. Long may it continue!

Keep in touch,  
Katherina

<http://www.whalesinmexico.com>

