

# For Whales' Sake

*Young Naturalists  
Watch Whales*

By Guest Columnist Paige Aoki



**T**he *Lukwa* crested the white caps. A chill wind buffeted those onboard, as they gazed out at the young humpback whale as it lunge-fed, almost seeming to wave at its awed on-lookers with one huge, white, pectoral fin...

On Sunday, September 30, the "Young Naturalists Club" (YNC) of Northern Vancouver Island saw so much more than just a wind-stirred ocean. During a whale watching expedition starting from

Telegraph Cove and sponsored by Stubbs Island Whale Watching, the Club was able to catch a glimpse of an underwater world we rarely think about, or that many people even know exists—

And it's right in our own backyard.

On this cold day, the YNC saw not only many species of diving birds, they were lucky enough to see 5 humpback whales, including a mother, named "Houdini" (a.k.a. "BCX0022" who has had five calves in seven years, nearly breaking the world record) and her 2007 calf, "Arial." The Club even saw a young humpback lunge-feed, opening its huge baleen jaws to engulf a mass

of small fish.

They also were able to see the three remaining members (all male) of the Orca matriline (family) dubbed: the "A36s". Named Plumper (A37/1977), Craycroft (A32/1964) and Kaikash (A46/1982), the three brothers were quite a sight, disappearing briefly beneath the waves, then emerging smoothly, their dorsal fins rising out of the water.

A pod of Pacific White-sided Dolphins arrived to annoy the A36s. It is as yet unknown why the dolphins do this. It does prove that the Dolphins can discern the difference between the population of Orca that eat mammals and the kind that eat fish.

On a small island, the YNC saw Steller Sea Lions perched upon the rocks, growling as they "hung out" above the waterline. They also saw Pacific Harbor Seals camouflaged against the islands.



**Northern Resident Killer Whale A46 or "Kaikash"**  
Photo by Jackie Hilderling

Inside the boat, the Young Naturalists learned about the three different types of BC Orca (Resident, Transient and Offshore), how they hunt, what they eat, and how each family and population sounds different. Also, they learned about how chemicals can affect whales and all the other marine creatures we care about so much and how we can make a positive difference.

**For more information on whales, conservation and the Young Naturalist Club see [www.econauts.org](http://www.econauts.org). Click: For Whales' Sake.**

*By Paige Aoki, age 14, award-winning Young Naturalist and student at North Island Secondary School, Port McNeill.*