

THE SHELLTONE WHALE PROJECT CETACEAN APPROACH CHARTER

THE ORIGIN

SINCE 1981, I'VE BEEN SWIMMING WITH CETACEANS TO STUDY THEM AND PRACTICE INTER-SPECIES COMMUNICATION WITH THEM, NOTABLY USING MUSIC, WITH THE INSTRUMENT I CREATED, THE SHELLTONE. OVER THE YEARS, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP TECHNIQUES FOR APPROACHING CETACEANS THAT ARE BOTH RESPECTFUL AND EFFECTIVE.

IN FACT, THE MORE THE APPROACH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE ANIMAL'S WELL-BEING, THE MORE EASILY IT WILL LET ITSELF BE APPROACHED WITHOUT FEAR AND SHARE ITS INTIMACY WITH US.

AS PART OF MY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MATTER OF COURSE TO USE THESE GENTLE APPROACH TECHNIQUES, AS DO MY COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS AND THE EXPERTS YOU'LL FIND ON OUR SITE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE WORLD OF WHALE WATCHING, SOME OPERATORS SHOW NO RESPECT FOR CETACEANS, ONLY THE RESULT COUNTS, AND THEY WANT TO OFFER THEIR PASSENGERS SENSATIONS AT ANY COST. AS A RESULT, WHALES ARE ATTACKED TO FORCE THEM TO DIVE SO THAT PASSENGERS CAN PHOTOGRAPH THEIR TAIL. THERE ARE ALSO APPROACHES TO NURSERIES, I.E. GROUPS OF VERY YOUNG ANIMALS AND BABIES, WATCHED OVER BY JUST TWO OR THREE ADULTS WHILE THE PARENTS HUNT DEEPER OR FURTHER OUT. THERE ARE ALSO PURSUITS OF ACTIVE SURFACE GROUPS DURING BREEDING, DISTURBANCES WHEN ANIMALS ARE HUNTING FOR FOOD, AND SO MANY OTHER INTOLERABLE SITUATIONS.

THAT'S WHY THE BASES WE SELECT GUARANTEE COMPLIANCE WITH THIS APPROACH.

Pierre Lavagne de Castellon



GETTING CLOSE TO CETACEANS

- CETACEANS MUST BE APPROACHED AT A SPEED NOT EXCEEDING 5 KNOTS AND AT AN ANGLE OF APPROXIMATELY 30° IN THE DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT OF THE ANIMALS. THE BOAT MUST NOT APPROACH MARINE MAMMALS CLOSER THAN 100 METERS, AND MUST MOVE AWAY IMMEDIATELY IF A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE, SPEED OR BEHAVIOR OF THE ANIMALS IS OBSERVED.
- THE BOAT MUST NEVER APPROACH FROM THE FRONT, THE REAR OR PERPENDICULAR TO THE DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT OF THE CETACEANS. THE APPROACH MUST BE GENTLE, PARALLEL TO THE GROUP BEING OBSERVED.
- THE USE OF SONAR OR "FISH FINDER" TYPE INSTRUMENTS TO LOCATE ANIMALS IS FORBIDDEN, AS THESE INSTRUMENTS EMIT FREQUENCIES THAT INTERFERE WITH THE ANIMALS' COMMUNICATION WITH EACH OTHER.
- DURING OBSERVATION, THE BOAT MUST BE KEPT AT A CONSTANT SPEED IN A DIRECTION PARALLEL TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE ANIMALS. MAXIMUM SPEED SHOULD NEVER BE FASTER THAN THE SLOWEST ANIMAL IN THE GROUP.
- IF A WHALE APPROACHES THE BOAT OR SUDDENLY APPEARS WITHIN 60 METERS OF THE BOAT, NEUTRAL MUST BE ENGAGED. FOR DOLPHINS, A CONSTANT, SLOW SPEED CAN BE MAINTAINED.
- IT IS FORBIDDEN TO APPROACH AND OBSERVE A "NURSERY", I.E. A GROUP OF BABIES OR JUVENILES SUPERVISED BY JUST A FEW ADULTS.
- THE PURSUIT OF CETACEANS DURING A HUNT IS PROHIBITED.
- DISTURBANCE OF ACTIVE SURFACE GROUPS DURING MATING IS PROHIBITED.
- YOU CAN'T OBSERVE THE SAME GROUP OF CETACEANS FOR MORE THAN 45 MINUTES.
- AVOID SUDDEN CHANGES OF DIRECTION OR SPEED DURING OBSERVATION. ANIMALS WILL BE CALMER IF THE BOAT MAINTAINS A CONSTANT SPEED.

CHARTER FOR APPROACHING CETACEANS, DRAWN UP BY THE SHELLTONE WHALE PROJECT.

