

Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society (SIMRS)
Principal Investigator's summary report by Rod Palm

With SIMRS, we've seen a lot of changes in our focus over the years. When we started in 1991, Killer Whale movements and their population dynamics were our sole purpose. This work continues under the guidance of the big guns in the Cetacean Research Program at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo.

Very shortly thereafter came the realization that marine mammal mortalities were a significant factor in monitoring the marine environment. So, under the guidance of advisors from the Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford we took on the grim task of gathering tissue samples for histopathology, blubber for toxicology and muscle for DNA. Gray, Humpback, Sperm and Killer Whales were necropsied along with sea lions otters and even a couple of turtles. Since the 2008 formation of the Marine Mammal Response Network, we have been able to pass most of this work on to them.

The Nestucca Barge Oil Spill in 1998, also gave us new direction. What species are at risk out there? For 8 years, monthly continental shelf transects were carried out. Birds and marine mammals sighted along the transect were recorded by numbers, species, distance from shore, depth and temperature of water. Unfortunately this work has scaled back and we now rely on commercial pelagic (open water) bird and whale watching tours, logging their reports.

The Department of Fisheries realization for the significance of eelgrass meadows prompted us to map all the meadows of southern Clayoquot Sound. This was done.

This list goes on but the purpose of this report is to consider, "Where do we go from Here?" As my old 'bod' is slowing down I'm feeling urged to focus my time on gathering the information collected over the last score of years and putting it into formats that will allow the general public/students/teachers/researchers a ready access not only to the basic information but also all the meta data that supports it. The venue for this of course is a large interactive web site with tabs for all the species and locations that we have and continue to work with along with links to our sponsors. Having started off in this direction, under the guidance of Caron Olive, we have begun to GIS map all the routes in Clayoquot that the Killer Whales have used since 1991. A big job as we're talking over 1,000 days of visitation. Our stalwart President Jessica Hutchison has solicited the services of Marc Bertrand, from Four Mind Designs & Concepts who has volunteered his expertise to work with us to get the site up and running. We're hoping to have at least the basic site useable by February.

All this being said, we're working towards utilizing our resources and connections to take on future field monitoring. I see these projects as being carried out by a younger crew and likely with related research/corporate partnerships. A few thoughts:

- Annual quantifying of eelgrass meadows at strategic sites in Southern Clayoquot.
- Examination of the water quality in Tofino Harbour as it relates to our outfalls.
- Carbon/plankton potential in Lemmens Inlet as related to oyster farm carrying capacity.
- Day long GPS mappings of Humpback Whale foraging strategies.

This is an exciting time for us, I feel myself easing back from the field projects to make room for fresh new minds and energy with a passion for monitoring this rich environment we're privileged with here in Clayoquot. Let it never be taken for granted. Kleco N'aas Kleco

Thoughts on projects? info@strawberryisle.org Help with the web site? jessicahutchinson@gmail.com

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