

# Australians For Animals

**Newsletter**

**February 2009**

**A GREAT  
START  
TO THE  
NEW  
YEAR!**



Dear Friends,  
**AFA DOES IT AGAIN !**

**GOVERNMENT WILL SET  
UP A DECENT CET A CEAN  
STRANDING PROGRAM.**

Miracles happen !  
Not long before Christmas,  
AFA managed ( with  
considerable effort) to organise  
a critical meeting between the  
charity, the New Zealand  
stranding expert we have been  
dialoguing with for the past  
seven months and senior  
personnel in the National Parks  
and Wildlife Service.

We were heartened to receive  
a letter from the NSW  
Minister for the Environment  
and Deputy Premier Carmel  
Tebbutt, thanking AFA for all  
our efforts to get a proper

stranding program in place in  
the State.

We were also very encouraged  
to hear from NPWS people  
that our request and offer of a  
pontoon and special training  
by the NZ expert was high on  
her list of priorities and that  
she has taken a personal  
interest in the whole issue.

So an excellent round table  
meeting came together in late  
December and it was cards on  
the table, lets get down to  
business. The best news of  
all is that once a new stranding  
program is in place, with  
NPWS personnel and  
members of the community  
training in the Marine Medic  
program, we will have a  
template for a national  
stranding program. NSW

NPWS is keen to push for this  
to happen and there are  
meetings taking place between  
NPWS and the Federal  
Government on this very  
issue.

AFA has promised the NSW  
government we will come up  
with \$9,000-10,000 for a  
specially designed rescue  
pontoon. This is a huge  
undertaking for the charity but  
if one whale or dolphin is  
saved from euthanasia or a  
slow miserable death as a  
result of our efforts, we're  
happy.

We will, in due course, be  
asking our major donors to  
help with the fund raising and  
we will also be approaching  
major companies to see if we

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can get some financial sponsorship.

### **3,000 EMAILS OVER THE LAST HUMPBACK STRANDING**

NPWS told AFA that we were the only group which had persisted in an effort to find a solution to the stranding crisis in NSW. Although the Service received an incredible 3000 emails after the tragic stranding of the young Humpback calf, many of them offering help and some crazy suggestions, nothing transpired.

Whilst AFA would like to pat ourselves on the back for this compliment, we're also aware that with three different Ministers for the Environment since the stranding took place, zilch response from NPWS and anyone in the NSW government, we're not surprised people gave up. However, as our supporters know, AFA is a very persistent grass roots group and the stranding problems in NSW HAD to be resolved.

It's good to start a New Year with some positive news.

The NZ stranding expert will be training Service officers and the public. His Marine Medical Manual is used in the UK, Europe, USA and Taiwan.

Of course there are groups in NSW, principally ORRCA and others who have been deeply involved in strandings of cetaceans. Unfortunately, there's always a turf battle with so many of the major conservation and animal welfare issues and stranded whales and dolphins are no exception.

AFA has suggested to the NSW government that anyone in the community should be able to undergo the training without having to join a wildlife group. This way, we can involve people who may not want to be seen as "greenies" but really want to help whales.

There will be more meetings with NPWS early in the year and we anticipate the Service will hold a workshop in coming months to try and smooth the waters between groups and focus instead of making certain NSW has the best stranding protocol and mechanical aids available.

### **PIERCE BROSNAN SUPPORTS THE GRAY WHALE**

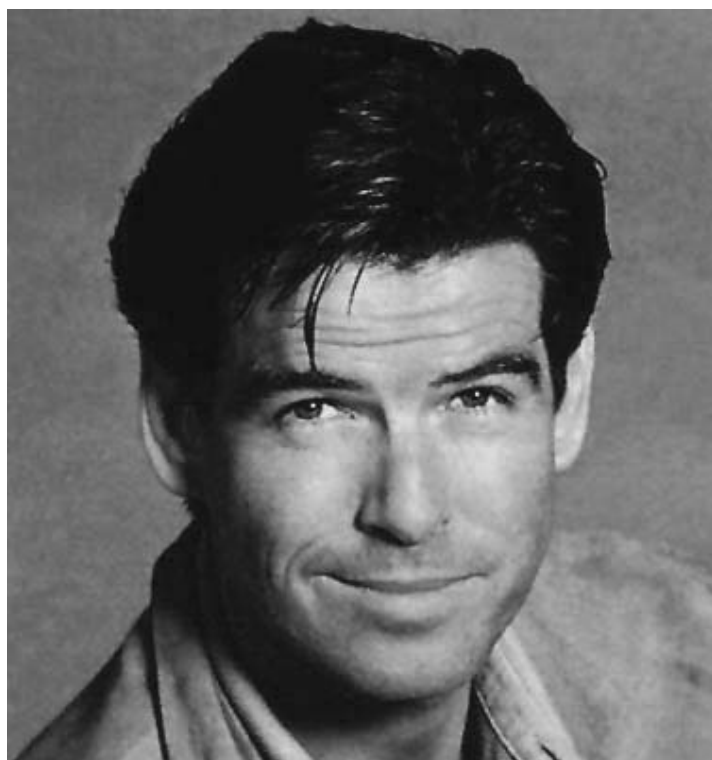
The truly incredible campaign to save the Gray Whale being waged by AFA is making great strides.

For starters, Hollywood film star Pierce Brosnan has agreed to support the California Gray Whale Coalition set up by AFA! We are waiting on a brief statement from Pierce in support of our work and then his picture and words will go up on the website which is [www.californiagraywhalecoalition.org](http://www.californiagraywhalecoalition.org)

That's a major breakthrough and we're very happy to have his support which has taken months and months of effort. Film stars are not easy to get to but as you all know, AFA is a very persistent organization!

Since our last newsletter, the charity has been very busy indeed setting in motion strategy which will hopefully result in maximum legal protection for the whales. As some of you will know, the most prestigious conservation organization in the world is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, based in Switzerland. IUCN as it is known, is responsible for the Red List which identifies all species by various designations such as Least Concern, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered.

These designations are critical in terms of IWC and national governments, they also have a great deal of force in conventions such as CITES (the Convention of Trade in Endangered Species) as species listed under the Red



List at certain categories cannot be traded.

The listings are regularly upgraded. An evaluation committee looks at the species, reviews the current status and recommends a listing.

So, AFA was absolutely shocked to see that the California Gray Whale had been recently listed as a species of LEAST CONCERN. Given the drastic impact of climate change on these whales and the massive oil and gas leases right across their feeding grounds, this listing is simply absurd, irresponsible and destined to drive the last remaining viable population to extinction.

### **GRAY WHALE BREAKTHROUGH.**

Under the umbrella of the California Gray Whale Coalition, we moved into action and have successfully passed the first hurdle in the series of hurdles which lie before us as we take the steps to have the Gray Whales listed as ENDANGERED.

AFA is being helped, as always, by some wonderful scientists who are top of their profession and experts on the

Gray Whale. We'll keep you posted but if this tactic succeeds, and we think it will, then this is going to put a giant spanner in the works of the oil and gas industry, the Makah tribe who are seeking a quota of Gray whales and the growing industrialisation along the whales migration route.

At the end of January, our Co-ordinator is flying out to the US to hold meetings with Congress members as we seek support for a Resolution in the new Obama congress. We have already set up deputations and are hopeful of getting the right support which will translate into forcing National Marine & Fisheries to carry out a comprehensive survey on all major threats; funding the survey and creating the right environment to relist these majestic whales under the US Endangered Species Act.

Sue is also planning on going down to Baja, Mexico to see first hand the status of the whales. There's every possibility that she will get a meeting with the Mexican Minister for the Environment as that process is in the works, thanks to one of the major Mexican organizations who is a member of the California Gray Whale Coalition! Huge times, huge issues. AFA

is making a big difference here and internationally.

## **TRADE IN WHALES BEGINS.**

Reprinted here is an article which our Co-ordinator wrote for CRIKEY, the internet ezine which is so popular in Australia. This article appeared on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

*Co-ordinator of Australians For Animals Int, Sue Arnold writes:*

A closed door meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in early December does not augur well for whales. Japan has no intention of giving up its phoney scientific whaling program. The meeting, convened to address a consensus solution to the current impasse, has already been joned by the Japanese government opening up trade in whale meat with Norway and Iceland.

The recent import of Fin and Minke whale meat by Japan has been virtually ignored by anti-whaling governments. In complete defiance of the global moratorium, the three whaling countries are lifting their collective finger to the whale conservation minded and in the process, opening the gates of hell. Commercial whaling will become a reality as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) overwhelms the IWC and the Convention in Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

To put the sheer gall of Japan in perspective, Fin whales are on Appendix 1 of CITES, a listing which prohibits trade. Although Japan has taken out reservations against the listing, effectively removing the authority of CITES; and given that the recent meeting of the IWC has been convened to find ways to keep Japan happy; this act of total defiance is an insulting international snub.

Leading the efforts to give Japan the go-ahead to ignore a raft of international conventions, including the

Antarctic Treaty System as well as expert international legal advice and its own legislation, is the USA. Current IWC Chair and US IWC Commissioner, Dr William Hogarth, has worked tirelessly in his term of office to appease Japan.

A Bush appointee, his orders come direct from the White House, leading many to believe that one of the last acts of President George W Bush is to give Japan, Norway and Iceland the go-ahead to start commercial whaling.

Very few involved in the whale struggle realise that the World Customs Organisation, (WCO) Harmonized Tariff Schedule, (adopted by all WTO ratifying governments) includes Tariff items for cetacean meat and products. This curious inclusion came about under the Bush administration. It's worth noting again that a global moratorium on commercial whaling is still in force.

But the question of whether trade aka the WTO, overwhelms Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) such as the IWC and CITES which rely on trade sanctions to enforce their resolutions, is not resolved. Only governments can take action in the WTO Tribunals. As an indication of the unwillingness of WTO ratifying countries to test the waters, Japan's subsidy of the whaling industry, some \$10 million USD annually, is WTO illegal according to trade lawyers.

But any challenge by the US or any other anti-whaling nation remains unlikely. It is the failure of the US to impose trade sanctions against Japan, Norway and Iceland which has led to the complete breakdown of the IWC. President Bush categorically refused to use trade sanctions as a means of enforcing MEAs, including the Kyoto Protocol.

The ALP's total back-down on its election promise to take Japan to the international courts is all about trade. A

Free Trade Agreement with Japan would be under threat. In the present economic meltdown, jeopardising the relationship between Australia's number one trade partner which generates around 37 billion dollars in export earnings is even more unlikely.

But wait, it gets worse. According to Sir Ronald Sanders, a former Caribbean diplomat, sources close to the IWC have indicated that the "compromise package" on which Hogarth is working will legitimize Japan's "scientific" whaling and give it a new right to kill whales in coastal waters.

And we know from insiders that the Pacific Island nations who are members of the IWC are more than enthusiastic in their support of "sustainable whaling". They would be. Once whaling in coastal waters becomes a reality, it will set an international legal precedent which is unstoppable. The IWC will be irrelevant.

Sanders believes Japan is so confident of the compromise being negotiated with Hogarth its whaling fleet set sail for Antarctica to hunt around 850 whales including 50 endangered fin whales.

With no transparency, no recognition of the public interest and total silence from IWC member nations, the fate of the world's whales is being decided behind closed doors.

Australia had a presence at the meeting but the government's anti-whaling stance is no longer taken seriously by the international community or the Australian public.

## **THE BURMESE ESCAPEES.**

AFA has pursued the cat escapee problem because so many people have cats and have problems in keeping them in a confined area. As you all know, we've nearly gone NUTS with the two Burmese kittens in our office who are now over 12 months old and should know better about behaving themselves.

Well, we've tried everything. One kind supporter called up from Melbourne to suggest we invest in a LOCATOR. This is a tiny electronic device which can be easily taped to a cat collar and the master thingie ( which looks like a mobile phone) is set to the frequency of the tiny electronic device.

This sounded like a great idea. We invested in a Locator and strapped devices to both collars. The cats soon learned when the noise which the master thingie sounded to come to the house. But they also soon learned how to ditch their collars and the device. And it didn't stop them wandering around the neighbourhood. And even though the range of this device is considerable, somehow the cats would find a way to get beyond the range and we were in the same mess. No cats, no idea where they were except that one of them was making a habit of crossing the road and lying in the gutter opposite the office.

So we called up the local fencer and sheepishly explained the problem. He was fantastic, and said that he had built lots of fences for people who didn't want to confine their cats to tunnels and wanted to give them a yard to run around in.

Now the yard at the back of the office is fenced with wire more solid than chicken wire, topped with clear alsonite and we have finally, at last confined the little so and so's.

But in front of the office there's a ti tree courtyard and we fenced the corner where one of the cats climbs out. This has been nothing more than a challenge to our Houdini cat. We've actually watched him as he sits in front of the latest barrier, sometimes for half an hour, thinking about how he can get out.

Last week, we watched in total amazement as he climbed up and then claw



## AND MORE GOOD NEWS

The Northern Star, our regional newspaper on the North Coast of NSW, has given our Co-ordinator a regular fortnightly column entitled Green View.

Sue can write on any environmental issue and she has had a good response to her columns. The paper has a reasonable distribution and who knows, there may be opportunities down the track for more columns as the newspaper is owned by APN, a big company with many outlets !

## THE KOALA IN NSW.

AFA has spent years attempting to protect the koala. We're appalled to learn that the NSW government now believes the numbers in NSW could be as low as 1000 animals, with 10,000 being the upper limit.

Through the newspaper column, we are able to draw attention to some of the key threats to these wonderful creatures. But even with a Recovery Plan being adopted by the NSW government, there is still no protection of habitat and development just keeps destroying more and more trees and their future.

If the koala goes extinct in NSW, it will be a major shame on the NSW government. Koalas are highly vulnerable to climate change and if ever there was a time for a massive effort to protect remaining habitat, its now.

We will be returning to this campaign. Sue has written to the Editor of the Sun Herald to see if the newspaper will consider starting up the Sun Herald Koala Fund once more. Fingers crossed !

A wonderful New Year to all our supporters.

For the Animals,

**Sue Arnold & Friends**

over claw found a very small exit between alsonite sheets where he could get out ! No one should ever ever underestimate the intelligence of animals !

## ORPHAN BATS.

AFA made a generous donation to WildCare Australia over the Christmas/New Year break as there was a disaster with the Canungra bat colony. All those massive storms with hail as big as tennis balls caused absolute chaos leaving over 330 baby bats abandoned. All the babies were between 1 and 4 weeks of age and completely incapable of looking after themselves.

It's really unusual for a bat mother to abandon her young, and there's no way they will come back to find their babies. So volunteers took on the task of feeding 330 babies every four hours around the clock !

AFA was very willing to support the work of WildCare as we know the intelligence of bats and in times of crises like these, everyone needs to pull together.

## SYDNEY ANIMAL PHYSIOTHERAPY.

AFA is happy to include (when we can) articles from

Sydney Animal Physiotherapy as the charity is keen to educate on issues which concern all animal owners. This month we have asked Kristine Edwards, the physiotherapist who set up this practice to write about aging.

## Aging and your Dog

We've all seen old dogs enjoying a walk with their owners. We've seen lots more, hobbling along, trying to keep up. We expect, as we age, to slow down, put on weight, develop arthritis, and generally don't cope so well. We get fatter, stiffer, more arthritic, it hurts to move and so we move less. ...it is true that we "use it or lose it."

Animals and people should be healthy, moving well and as active and pain free as possible, well into old age.

Signs that your dog is aging or sore: lethargic, difficulty standing up, trouble changing positions, can't jump onto the couch any more, seems stiff, looks depressed, poor appetite.

What can you do to help your dog have a comfortable old age?... regular vet checks, supplements (e.g. glucosamine), weight control, physiotherapy, acupuncture, exercise!

Exercise is one of the big anti-aging factors....it keeps us energised and fit, and helps to prevent diabetes, arthritis, heart disease

You need to make modifications as your dog gets older.

For instance, you both may be used to long walks, but notice that he is struggling to keep up once he hits middle age (7-8 years)... limping, slow or exhibiting signs of distress at the end of the walk?

He may need some treatment for pain, or simply a change in routine...much easier on his body to do 2 short walks daily, rather than one long marathon.

Sometimes changing the type of exercise is necessary, or simply beneficial. Swimming and wading in the water is great exercise and much kinder on older joints than running or walking on hard ground.

Doing simple stretches and balance exercises with your dog is also helpful.

Kristine Edwards is a physiotherapist and acupuncturist. She can be contacted on 0408229341 or [www.sydneyanimalphysiotherapy.com](http://www.sydneyanimalphysiotherapy.com)