

Tourism and Conservation - How Can They Work Together

Oceanic Society

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Oceanic Society

- Founded in 1969, the Oceanic Society protects endangered wildlife and preserves threatened marine habitats..



Approach

- - the establishment of protected natural areas, supported and sustained through scientific research,
- - and the development of programs that provide local communities with ecologically-sustainable economic alternatives.



Our Whale Watching Experience

- Since 1974, Oceanic Society has conducted whale watching trips for over 150,000 people worldwide



Tourism & Conservation: Common Goals



- A Healthy Ecosystem
- Abundant Wildlife
- Resources to maintain both for the benefit of conservation and tourism

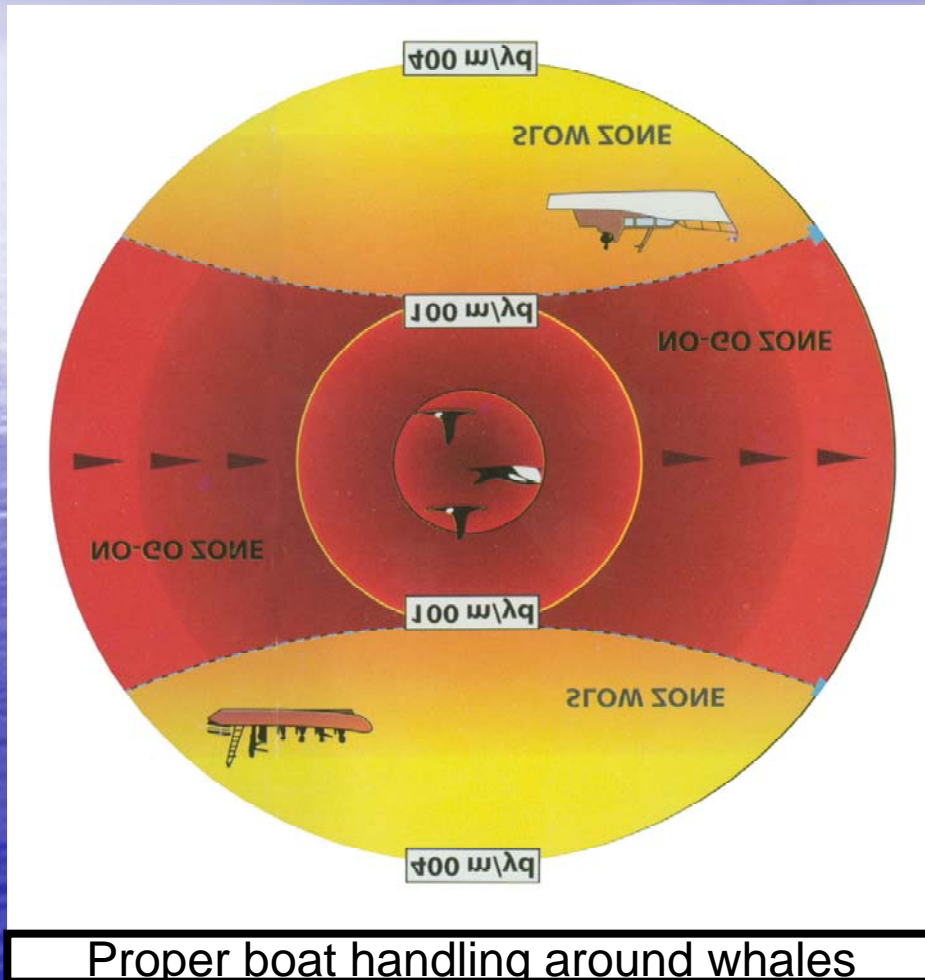
Tourism & Conservation Symbiosis

– TOURISM

- -Low-impact whale watching
- -Set proper client expectations
- -Educate public
- -Facilitate research



Basic Eco-friendly Ingredients



- Four stroke engines
- Garbage properly disposed
- Operate whale watch boat in ecologically responsible manner

Boater Guidelines

When in sight of whales

- Do not cross the whale's path
- Do not restrict normal behavior
- Do not speed around whale
- No sudden changes in speed or direction
- Maintain at least 100 yards distance from the whale
- Assess whale's course
- Assess whale's swimming speed
- Assess activity of other boats

Good Operation - Bad Operation



Recipe for Successful Whale Watching Program

- Proper audience expectations
- Proper visitor preparation
- Safe operation-people and whales
- Reliable whale sightings
- Plan for no whale sightings
- Good Guide: informative, entertaining, trained in first-aid
- Adaptive approach

Tourism & Conservation Symbiosis

CONSERVATION: *Added Value*

- Reservoir for information and personnel
- Source for training
- Marketing-spread the word about whale watching and its benefits
- Facilitate media contact
- Provide resources for ecosystem management

Case Study: San Ignacio Lagoon, Baja California

- Prior 1988, small-scale fisheries were the most important economic activity in Laguna San Ignacio
- Problems: variable, unpredictable harvest, and over-fishing

Case Study: Baja California

- In the early 1990's, recreational whale watching was developed
- North American owned live-aboard boats were primarily utilized
- Less than 1% of gross income generated spent on local salaries and supplies



Case Study: Baja California Outcomes



- Whale watching was developed by the Mexican government as a means to provide local fishermen with a sustainable income, via a permit system issued only to local residents.
- Fishermen are now managers of the whale watching operation in San Ignacio.

Case Study: Baja California

- Key to success included: minimizing environmental impacts, and involving local inhabitants in all aspects of the whale watching program

- Community consensus on fee structure and agreement on community needs.



- Revenues from whale watching were pooled and used to build clinic, craft shop, school
- The Fishermen's cooperative now co-manages this World Heritage Site.

Case Study: Belize

- In southern Belize, fishing was always been the primary way of life. Dolphin watching and bird watching were unknown activities.



Case Study: Belize - T.I.D.E

- The Toledo Institute for Development and Environment was established by the government to promote ecotourism.
- Primary objectives were to provide an alternative and sustainable means of livelihood for area residents.



Case Study Belize: Tide Tours

- Their stated goal is to help reduce poverty by introducing more profitable economic opportunities, and to generate funding for conservation work.
- Tour guide training and certification for former fishermen.
- Micro-enterprise training to obtain skills to join the tourism industry.

Case Study Belize: Tide Tours Management Guidelines

- Provide alternative sources of income to previous resource-extractive and destructive practices.
- Slow resource extraction, while allowing fishermen to develop as ecotourism entrepreneurs.
- Work with as many individuals as possible on a rotating and equal basis.
- Undertake marketing to promote ecotourism ventures.

Peru Possibilities

Criteria: Wildlife Rich Environment

- At least 500-1,000 freshwater dolphins, *Inia geoffrensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*, utilizing the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve
- They move freely between biotopes, confluence areas of special significance
- *Inia* can be playful and curious
- Both species observed in close-knit groups although *Sotalia* appears more social
- Within last decade, substantial numbers are killed in fishing gear and through poisoning



Peru Possibilities

Criteria: Wildlife Rich Environment

- Abundant and diverse cetacean species found near shore coastal Peru



Tourism and Conservation -

How Can They Work Together Successfully

- Unite to foster the political will to uphold framework
- On-going dialogue among user groups
- Unite to ensure laws for the protection of dolphins and whales are enforced
- Value local knowledge
- Strategic plan
- Inclusive and transparent management
- Proper funding
- Continue to foster cooperation between tourism and conservation.



A large whale, likely a humpback whale, is swimming vertically in clear blue water. Several smaller calves are swimming around it, some appearing to be nursing. The scene is captured from an underwater perspective, showing the sun's rays filtering through the water.

Recommendations

- Utilize scientific data to set up whale watching guidelines
 - Establish research to monitor impacts
 - Determine levels of acceptable change
 - Practice Adaptive management
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- Collectively, develop standards: values, fees, socio-economic and conservation priorities