

Whales Arriving on Time for Whale Fest

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Erik Wander/KMXT

As part of Whale Fest Kodiak 2009, a local marine mammal researcher will present the results of some her latest research on Gray and Humpback whales. The talk will also include play-by-play highlights of a recent, successful whale disentanglement.

KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

Whale Researcher Bree Witteveen of the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Fishery Technology Center will begin her talk with highlights from the October 2008 disentanglement of a Humpback whale in Uyak Bay. Witteveen described the presentation as a play-by-play of the successful disentanglement, complete with pictures of the events as they unfolded.

Witteveen will also discuss the findings of the Gray Whale Project conducted in July 2008 in Uyak Bay. She said the study focused on the Gray Whales that remain in Kodiak waters all year as opposed to following normal migratory patterns and why they do so.

-- (Witteveen 1 35 sec. "The gray whale project ... why they might be doing that.")

Also on Witteveen's agenda will be the final results of the SPLASH project on Humpback Whales. SPLASH is an acronym for Structure of Populations, Levels of Abundance and Status of Humpback Whales. Witteveen said the study took place from 2004 to 2006 and the results are now in and are encouraging.

-- (Witteveen 2 27 sec. "I think the most exciting thing ... that we found as

well.")

Witteveen said such projects and studies tend to build upon one another, raising new questions even as they yield answers to previous questions. She said this is the nature of marine research.

-- (Witteveen 3 19 sec. "All of our projects ... a story or two to each piece.")

According to Witteveen, she received a report on whale sightings Tuesday from what she referred to as her scouts, actually her in-laws. Witteveen said they traveled via boat from town to Ugak Bay and reported spotting a total of four humpbacks and 14 grays in the Narrow Cape, off Fossil Beach and Ugak Bay areas in a single day. Witteveen will present her research update Tuesday from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Fishery Technology Center.

I'm
Erik Wander.

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