



Project: Tourists Contribute to Whale Research

Starting in the summer of 2010, the Foundation will encourage whale watchers/ tourists to participate in humpback whale research. Currently we obtain data on whale behavior and as well as the collection of photo id's of humpback whales via our interns and Foundation staff. We are requesting that tourists who are on the water daily and who take many good photographs of 'whale tails' (how we identify our whale population), share their photos with our Foundation.

Every day for a few hours our staff will be on hand to accept the downloading of tourist photographs. This will involve the local tourist in our research and make their time on the boat more memorable as they 'shoot for a purpose'. More importantly this process will serve as a re-education of the tourist boat captains as to the rules and regulations concerning whale tourism. Boat captains are obligated by Ecuadorian law to take the following actions when taking tourists for whale watching adventures:

- Tourist boats must approach whales either from the side or from behind and slow their speed to 5 knots when they are within 400 meters of the whale pod.
- The boat must be kept a minimum of 100 meters from the whale pod unless the whale pod approaches the boat at which time the boat is in idle and remains so until the pod has moved from the ship's vicinity.
- The Maximum observation time per pod is 25 minutes
- No more than three boats may be around a pod of whales at any given time

In addition, we are encouraging tourists to request that the captain give them the best view of the ventral fluke (Underside of the whale tail) as that provides researchers with data concerning the possible identity of the whale.

This project will involve both the tourist in the research project as well as keeping the boat fleet and captains within accordance of Ecuadorian law concerning whale watching. Lately there has been neglect on the part of boat captains concerning several points of the whale watching laws and by putting the tourists on the researcher's side, we will slowly re-educate the tourism fleet.