

# Greenpeace corrects whale story

To The Editor:

In response to the the Tundra Times May 20 article regarding the stranded minke whale at Pt. Woronzoff, I would like to submit the following comments.

The comment made by the biologist that was present for only about the first hour of the ordeal was basically correct in that whales often beach themselves because of a terminal illness or injury. It is also true that whales finding themselves in unfamiliar waters often become stranded unintentionally due to unexpected tidal flows. Since minke whales are not at all common in the upper Cook Inlet, but more so in the lower inlet and Prince William Sound areas, that this is a more likely explanation for the stranding.

Secondly, the whale was not moved by the volunteers except to help it maintain it's upright position i.e. placing various forms of support under its right side to prevent its rolling over, which likely would have caused extensive internal damage to the animal. Once the incoming tide was sufficient to allow the whale to become more buoyant, it was positioned so as to keep its blowhole above water level to prevent drowning.

The whale swam off under its own power and has not been

seen since. Whether or not it later rebached itself is debatable. Considering the extreme possibility that it may have been stranded merely by accident as described above, and that it was a comparatively small whale (the larger "great whales" that have become beached usually die because of their tremendous weight which inevitably serves to collapse the internal organs), weighing perhaps 1500-2000 pounds, leads to speculation that it has indeed likely survived.

It is also interesting to note that the biologist who was on hand from approximately 7:30-9 a.m. was overheard saying that "he had more important things to do." Whale strandings worldwide have been a biological and scientific mystery for many years.

Many theories have arisen, but no answers confirmed. The majority of strandings that have occurred have generally gone undetected until it was medically impossible to adequately investigate the reasons for them, let alone the ability to return the animals to the sea.

This incident was indeed a rare one which should have demanded much more biological attention, particularly in light of the fact that this is the second incident involving a live stranded minke whale in the upper Cook

Inlet. The stranding which occurred last year ended in apparent success as well when the whale again swam off into deep water.

Finally, the "rumor" that Dr. Spaulding had attempted to kill the whale with a lethal injection is flatly untrue. The conversation overheard by the reporter from another Anchorage paper was taken completely out of context.

Dr. Spaulding had indeed received authority from a certified scientist in Seattle to kill the animal "if necessary." He was prepared to do so if asked. The agreement between myself, Agent Larry Hilton of National Marine Fisheries Service and Dr. Spaulding was that no attempt would be made to destroy the whale unless it became evident that it indeed was terminally injured or refused to go back out to sea. Some two pints of blood were removed from a vein in the tail, to be analyzed later, but never was there any intent to inject the animal with lethal medications.

Thank you all very much for your coverage of this wonderful yet unfortunate, and perhaps even miraculous event. We thank you and I'm pretty sure the whale thanks you too.

Mark A. Boberick/Director  
Greenpeace Alaska

## He shares her dream of Alaska

To The Editor:

I am moved greatly by the letter written by Mary Jane Litchard you titled "A dream of a Revitalized Alaska".

I share her dreams and I have burned brain cells thinking of how to go about stalling and stopping the steadily creeping advance of the dreaded oil companies into our environment.

The Silent Dreamer dreams of accidents describing them so vividly they seem to have happened already. I thank my GOD it hasn't already happened. But ever since I've heard and known the oil companies eyeing and feeling around our environment, making plans to develop, I fear these accidents will happen.

I write this letter on a hill overlooking the beautiful bay near where I live. I see fishnet floaters bobbing in the waves. Shorebirds scuttle around poking their bills into the mud. Ducks and loons fly near above

the water, then splash into the water. Geese come in from the bay flats after feeding. Delicious clams sit waiting to be shoveled out.

Just this spring when I was fishing for tom cod out on the ice edge, a seal swam up to me before my brother shot it. All seals seem to have pleading eyes and this one was no different. This is the second such seal to come close to me, unafraid. Last month during a muskrat hunt, I shot at an otter thinking it was a giant muskrat. I missed but it came right up to me, swam circles and tumbles poking its head above the surface making sputtering noises at me. All of a sudden it stopped and looked me in the eye. My hunter instinct got the best of me and I killed it. A friend of mine confided to me they hurry to disappear quickly after being shot at.

I am 22 years old and went through Land and Resource

Management study, aquired an A.A. degree and had summer jobs under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service associated with the study. And I know what a serious, severe and adverse impact an oil spill would have if it did occur.

I did not know when to begin but the letter from Ms. Litchard is a good place to start. Its time to form a united Alaska and form a big NO all along the coast of Alaska.

Heads up, Alaska...here is one "Freedom" fighter (freedom from noisy oil derricks invading our seas) who is willing to do honest and legal battle to keep our environment left alone as is.

You capable young folk out there...Heads up...here is one Alaskan willing to step forward and be counted if there is a call to defend our sensitive and fragile seas.

I am not alone...am I?

Allen M. Joseph