

Monitoring Belugas in Alaska's Cook Inlet



Introduction:

Our Alaskan Cook Inlet Beluga whales were presently listed as an Endangered Species. This just happened during our project. This project will monitoring of the Cook Inlet belugas whales. Throughout the research we have learned that, the highest natural threats are stranding and diseases. The human activity around the whales have been causing threats to there population and people have been illegally poaching, illegal harassment, prey reduction (fewer



fish), and noise (port development). The moderate natural threats (like orcas and other preorders) are predation. And the moderate human caused threats are, lethal incident take, coast development (habitat loss), ship strikes (small vessels), and research. We know this because when we were researching Cook Inlet belugas whales we found an article in the

Anchorage Daily News Paper that showed studies, which pointed to human's disruption the water around the whales. The organization tat support our Cook Inlet beluga whales and have studied the issue, these organizations are, NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration), they has started up a beluga monitoring system, FACR (Friends Of Anchorage Coastal Refuge). As part of this project we attended a weekend training in the protocols for monitoring belugas. This training is an effort by NOAA and FACR to use citizen scientists to help keep track of where and how many belugas there are in the inlet. We used this protocol for our project.

Materials:

- 📷 Nikon Binoculars
- 📷 Note book and pencil
- 📷 Camera
- 📷 Clip board

Procedures:

When we went to Beluga point is look for belugas in the Cook Inlet. To get there we drove from Anchorage to Beluga point. We have been researching on belugas and wanted to see some for ourselves.

- 1) We parked the car in the same spot each time we went. Be careful near highways and railroads and on steep slopes!
- 2) We got our binoculars out
- 3) Got out of the car and went down over the rail road and found a tall rock to stand on and watch for the Belugas
- 4) Be sure you are dressed warmly. We started to observe the environment around us and wrote it down. (Animal/ human activity)
- 5) We observed the water for sixty to ninety minutes



- 6) Recorded the type of water weather/ water there was
- 7) Recorded if we saw belugas and if we did not

Results:

Day	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Wednesday
Date	October, 18 th 2008	October, 19 th 2008	October, 20 th 2008	October, 22 nd 2008
Time	9:30 am	10; 20 am	11:20 am	1:39 pm
Temperature	28 Degrees	37 Degrees	39 Degrees	About 20 Degrees
Water (choppy...)	Slightly Rough	Quite, very little white caps	Very Calm	Very Choppy
Weather	Mostly Sunny but moderate wind conditions	Partly sunny and partly cloudy, not as windy as it was before	Partly Sunny, No Wind, very clear sky's, Beautiful	Very foggy with some snow and sun. Lot of winds, white caps, and very cold
Surroundings	Bird, Cars and people	1 bird, lots of people taking pictures not many cars, and train	No birds, lots of people walking around on beluga point and taking pictures.	Lots o passing cars, no wild life besides very few people.
Tide Time	10:28 am	11:19 am	12:21 pm	2:59 pm
Number of whales seen	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

Conclusion:

At the beginning of our project we learned that the beluga population was declining and we wanted to see for ourselves and we did, our prediction was that we'd see no beluga whales because of the latest reports of the past couple of years. But just because we hadn't seen any Beluga whales during our four days of observation, does not mean other



people haven't seen them or that there aren't any Belugas out there. Now that the belugas are listed under the endangered species act, maybe we can learn more about where they go when and how we can work to make sure we have them in the future.