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# THE WHALE WATCH

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*Descendants of Whaling Masters, Inc.*

*Spring 2009*

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## Matthew Stackpole

Call to meeting! Be sure to join us on June 13, 2009 at the Wamsutta Club, New Bedford for the DWM's Annual Meeting and Luncheon. Our guest speaker will be Matthew Stackpole from Mystic Seaport who will present an illustrated talk - "And Only She Remains: The Past, Present and Future of the *Charles W. Morgan*." Stackpole, a native of Nantucket, grew up at Mystic Seaport where his father was curator for many years. Our DWM members will recall our personalized tour of the Martha's Vineyard Historical Society's Museum in 2003 by the then Executive Director, Matthew Stackpole. He has now returned to the Seaport to work on the *Charles W. Morgan* Restoration Project. Invitations are in the mail and guests are always welcome. Please send your reservations to Bud Potter, 194 Main St., Fairhaven, MA 02719 by the 8th of June.



*Matt Stackpole and Bud Potter  
Martha's Vineyard*

Feeding in Cape Cod Bay usually begins in late March or early April, directly corresponding with changes in the concentrations and types of zooplankton. Dr. Charles "Stormy" Mayo explained the transition from the winter *Pseudocalanus* ssp to the calorically rich Spring *Calanus finmarchicus*. It is unusual to have so many Right Whales (60-80) feeding on the winter variety in March this year. Last year's record number of 70 to 100 Right Whales congregated later in April to feast on their favorite food, *Calanus finmarchicus*. In April of this year the Aerial team reported an orange plankton slick large and dense enough to photograph from the air. The orange color comes from the lipid sac of the minute crustaceans. By mid-May the Right Whales usually move on, leaving Cape Cod Bay for their summer feeding grounds in the Bay of Fundy. Their decision to leave, like their one to arrive, will be dependent upon the ever changing zooplankton resources in the Bay.

The Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, The New England Aquarium and the Cetacean Society International have all been reporting a record breaking birth rate for the Right Whales this year. Thirty-nine calves were born, surpassing the 2001 record of thirty-one. Three mother and calf pairs have already been sighted this year in Cape Cod Bay.

The Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies posts monthly field notes on the Right Whales based on observations from their aerial surveillance and research vessels. Their reports made this article possible. For more information visit their website: <http://www.coastalstudies.org>.



## They're Back!

North American Right Whales typically start appearing in New England waters in January. This year acoustic buoys in Cape Cod Bay were picking up Right Whale calls weeks before the first confirmed sightings. The Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies Aerial Survey Team spotted their first Right Whale on the 26th of January off Jeremy Point in Wellfleet and four days later the *R/V Shearwater* sighted two Right Whales for their "first of the season".

## New Whale Exhibit

It has been a long haul since that fateful night when a fifteen year old Right Whale was struck and killed off the coast of Virginia in November of 2004. She was only two months from delivering her first calf. It was another

devastating loss for the dwindling population of North American Right Whales. Now the pair are the latest addition to the New Bedford Whaling Museum's educational collection of whale skeletons.

The bones were recovered by composting; the same method successfully used on the Sperm Whale skeleton. Assembly began in 2006 in the shadow of the *Lagoda*. Museum visitors watched the painstaking task of rearticulation led by Andrew and Jean Konnerth; veterans of the KOBOW and Sperm Whale projects.

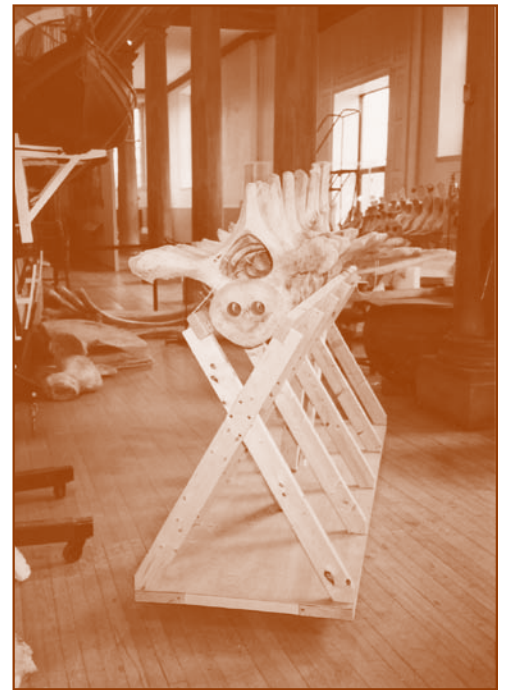


2006  
*Work Begins*

Last November, the two ton skeleton was ready to take its place in the Jacobs Family Gallery. Museum visitors were then

witnessing the complicated process of hauling the skeleton out of the *Lagoda* Room, by crane, bringing it down the streets around the museum, by flatbed truck, and drawing it through one of the gallery windows, once again by lifts and crane.

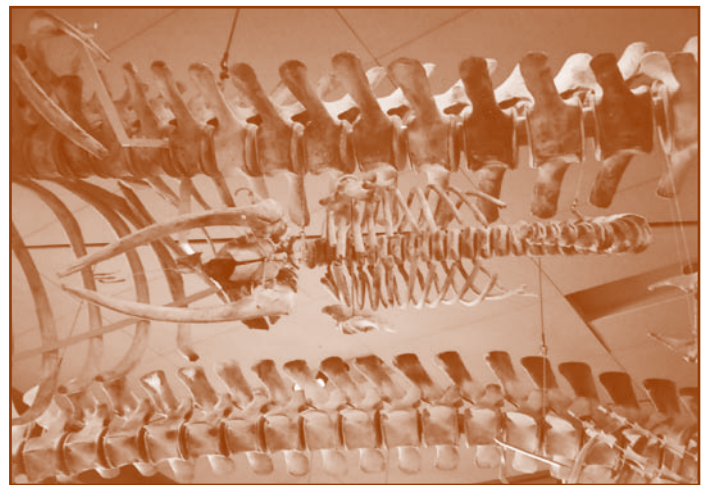
Dr. Daniel DenDanto and his crew from Whales and Nails and a team of riggers from N.C. Hudon, Inc. labored over a week, at times twenty-five feet in the air, to suspend the massive forty-nine foot skeleton from the gallery ceiling. The installation was completed in December 2008 when the twelve foot long fetal skeleton was placed beneath its mother's backbone.



2007  
*Aligning the vertebrae*



*Right Whale in Jacobs Family Gallery*

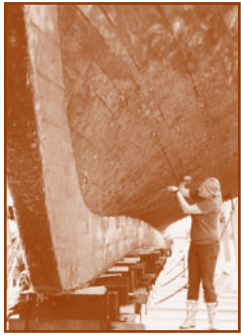


*Right Whale fetus framed by the backbones of its mother and the Blue Whale*



## Hauled Ashore!

Saturday, November 1st was a picture perfect day for the raising of the *Charles W. Morgan*. Over five hundred spectators crowded the Henry B. duPont Preservation Shipyard for this historic event. Museum President and Director Douglas Teeson welcomed guests, Shipyard Director Quentin Snediker explained the efforts it took to get the *Morgan* this far and Dr. James T. Carlton introduced the Mystic River Biological Survey being conducted by Williams-Mystic students. The raising itself was a long, silent looming as the vessel slowly rose from the water at about a foot per minute. Shipyard workers had to then brace



the towering hull before the crowd was allowed to walk alongside her. Williams-Mystic students scurried around gathering over 100 samples of marine organisms from the surface of the hull while the crowd milled about. Visually, the scale was staggering; peering up along the rudder to her sternboard or down the curves of her 105 foot hull.

Plans for this day began with surveys in 1996 and 2002 that indicated a need for restoration from “the wind and waterline and expanding to at least below the turn of the bilge”. The first order of business would be to replace the shipyard’s aging lift deck. After raising \$10 million in state, federal and private funds the Henry B. duPont Preservation Shipyard now has a state of the art, computerized shiplift capable of raising the 340 long ton whaleship. (250-260 LT without ballast) Stockpiling of specialized woods has been an ongoing project. The *Morgan* will require white oak, live oak, locust and old growth long leaf yellow pine. Hurricanes Hugo, Ivan and Katrina have provided, literally,

a “windfall” of live oak trees. Three hundred tons of live oak is already at hand.

Before the *Morgan* could be hauled out, she had to be “derigged”. Almost everything from the deck up was removed. Masts, yards, booms, rigging, whaleboats, casks & kegs were all laid out along Chubb’s Wharf. Cranes were used to remove forty tons of concrete and lead ballast from the hold. Some ballast was actually put back to make the vessel more manageable for her hour long trip to the shipyard on October 20th. Once in the shipyard, divers had to position the *Morgan* within the cradle of the lifting platform.

After the haul out, the *Morgan* was drawn by railway into the yard and on November 17th she was sidetracked to her restoration site. The crew has been busy with the complex process of stabilizing the hull. There are six layers from the outside inward: copper sheathing, softwood sheathing, tarred felt, wood planking, framing and the ceiling. Removal of these layers makes the hull more flexible and the shipwrights are already down to the planking. The “hogging”, or sag at both ends of the vessel is measurably decreasing with gravity. Moulds, keel blocks, metal and wooden stanchions are all used to control the movement of the hull. A system of misting is also necessary to keep the hull wet.

So much more is happening than can be reported here. Our readers, even from afar, can follow the restorations of the *Charles W. Morgan* on the Seaport’s website. Visit <http://www.mysticseaport.org> where you can view photos and videos and read updates on her progress. Also plan to join our Fall excursion to Mystic Seaport, October 4 & 5th. A tour of the *Charles W. Morgan* Restoration with Matthew Stackpole will be the highlight of our trip!



# 2009 Calendar of Events

**June 13th**

**Annual Meeting - 12 noon**

Wamsutta Club, New Bedford  
Luncheon, Business Meeting & Election of Officers

Program: "And Only She Remains: The Past, Present and Future of the *Charles W. Morgan*." by Matthew Stackpole of Mystic Seaport.

**October 4 & 5**

**"Mystic and the Morgan"**

Save the date! Plans are being made for an outing to Mystic Seaport. Plans include a visit to the Mystic Aquarium and a day in the Seaport where we will tour the *Morgan* restoration and steam away on the *SS Sabino*. More info to follow.

*Save the Dates!*

**July 18 & 19**

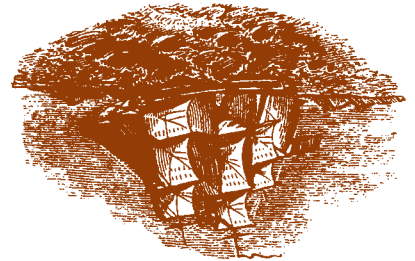
**Mattapoisett Harbor Days**

Shipyard Park, Mattapoisett  
Meet us at the rock and help peddle our wares! Enjoy the company of fellow descendants as we spread the word about DWM and present attractive gift items, books and other educational materials on whales and whaling history.

## Staying in Touch

DWM members are encouraged to visit our web page ([www.whalingmasters.org](http://www.whalingmasters.org)). Click on "Event Calendar" to see photos of our activities, trips and the past two annual dinners. We would also like to build an e-mail list of our membership. If you would like to be included, please reply to [whalingmasters@yahoo.com](mailto:whalingmasters@yahoo.com) with your e-mail address.

[www.whalingmasters.org](http://www.whalingmasters.org)



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