

RIP



Hanna Grim helpin' granddad

Image Pearl Palm

September 12, at 14:00, 8 nautical miles off Long Beach, Claire Mosley (Biologist on Jamie's Whaling Station vessel "Leviathan 2") spots something curious floating in the distance; a few pleading words to Skipper Chris McCue and the course is altered to check it out. They didn't expect this but there it is – a big bull Kawkawin (Killer Whale) dead in the water. Chris calls us, and the machine starts turning. Here's the skinny: a call to Skipper Marcel Theriault (Ceara Salvage) – says he could have his vessel "Beach Hopper" on scene within an hour; a call to Graeme Ellis and John Ford (the top whale brass at the Pacific Biological Station [PBS]) – "Can you guys budget a recovery?"; their network kicks into gear and within an hour Marcel is on his way. "Meanwhile back at the ranch" –oops sorry, back at the whale, the whale-watch fleet has been rotating a presence so that the location is not lost. A call back from PBS and Marcel is on site and has the whale in tow by 17:30. Shortly after, the Coast Guard vessel "Atlin Post" takes over to tow against the ebbing tide. Once they're in the harbour, Marcel pulls it over to us here on Strawberry Island, where we explore the body and bask in its aromatic splendour for 36+ hours. At dawn on Saturday, Marcel working in conjunction with the "Atlin Post" pickup the whale and have it delivered to the Grice Bay boat ramp, where Long Beach Auto is able to drag the carcass up out of the water. Graeme is first on scene and right away identifies the whale as the 33-year-old Northern Resident I46, who generally ranges through the inside Northern waters of Vancouver Island. Shortly after, a keen and able-bodied necropsy crew headed up by Dr. Stephen Raverty (pathologist at the Provincial Animal Health Center at Abbotsford) is getting down and dirty taking I46 apart and bagging organ tissue samples and de-fleshing the bones for shipment to the Ottawa Museum. By mid-afternoon the deed is done, and Marcel along with the "Atlin Post" take charge of the remaining meat, blubber and assorted body parts for disposal in the open ocean.

I46 was a late middle-aged Kawkawin who appeared to have normal bodyweight, and had fairly recently been eating, as was evident by the salmon bones that were found in the upper intestinal track along with a barbless treble hook that had not traumatically obstructed digestion. No major external or internal trauma was found, so it's now up to the lab at Abbotsford to see what they can find with their histo-, toxo- and all their other ologies. These folks are very thorough, but it all takes time, so it may be a while before I can get back to you with any results.

Later...Rod info@strawberrysle.org

more images to follow