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For Immediate Release

Irish Whale & Dolphin Group to Embark on Ireland-Iceland Humpback Whale Research Expedition

A voyage of discovery in the North Atlantic, researchers will use photo identification to increase knowledge of the burgeoning whale population between the two island nations.



Photo matching the unique markings on humpback tails makes studying them more possible than ever.
Photo: Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry, Ireland by Nick Massett, IWDG

KILMACANOGUE, Ireland, April 16, 2018 – The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG) and Inis the Energy of the Sea, the County Wicklow based boutique perfumery, announce the launch of the Ireland to Iceland Humpback Whale Expedition, scheduled to commence in late May. The first scientific research of its kind within the humpback summer feeding grounds in and around the two island nations, the primary purpose of this expedition is to collect photo identification data that will help better protect these magnificent marine mammals.

Once hunted to the brink of extinction, humpback whales have been sighted in recent years in increasing numbers in the waters surrounding Ireland. While uncertain information on past abundance makes it difficult to assess the extent of the recovery of this species, further study into their movements in the North Atlantic will help scientists to better understand them, with the goal of more effective conservation of humpbacks.

Working with colleagues in Iceland and the United States, the IWDG have recently confirmed, through photo identification, that several humpback whales have been observed in both Irish and Icelandic waters, often in the same year. With the now established fact that Ireland and Iceland share a whale population, this expedition aims to build on these findings.

The IWDG research vessel Celtic Mist will sail to Iceland in late May 2018. The crew will then spend a month exploring Icelandic waters, surveying for humpback whales and other species, often in remote areas like the Arctic Circle, with a special emphasis on obtaining photo identification.

Humpbacks can be identified by the black and white pigmentation patterns on the underside of their flukes (tails), which are unique to each whale, much like a human fingerprint. These images allow researchers to track individual whales, over long periods of time, in a non-invasive way. Images of humpback tails now provide scientists with detailed data on reproduction, migration, social interactions and population dynamics.



Scientists and crew aboard Celtic Mist, the IWDG Research Vessel, will sail and survey an area of approximately 4,500 KM on this expedition.

Dr. Simon Berrow, Chief Science Officer with the IWDG, further describes the goals of the trip: “We will work in collaboration with colleagues in the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute and the University of Iceland with the aim of promoting links with coastal communities, combining our knowledge and resources to more effectively carry out our shared responsibilities towards humpback whale conservation and management.”

The research team will locate and identify whales through non-invasive techniques of visual observation, acoustic recordings, and photo identification images which will be matched against Icelandic and The North Atlantic Humpback Whale photo ID catalogues. Weather permitting, the team will use aerial drones and will aim to capture underwater photography and video footage of their findings. Filmmaker

Tony Whelan will be aboard throughout the expedition, with a feature length documentary production planned for release later in the year.

The Ireland-Iceland Expedition is being sponsored by Inis the Energy of the Sea – Fragrances of Ireland. Core funders of the IWDG since 2001, Inis has provided essential support to IWDG, as well as sponsoring the annual All-Ireland Whale Watch Day. In 2016 Inis funded the IWDG's 25th Anniversary Whale Sanctuary Cruise in celebration of the declaration of Ireland's waters as Europe's first whale and dolphin sanctuary.

The sponsorship of this expedition links the core brand values of Inis: love of the sea, environmental responsibility, support of local enterprises and the ethos that we are all connected - one world, one ocean.

David Cox, Managing Director of Inis - Fragrances of Ireland, explains the synergy between Inis and ocean conservation efforts: "It's a natural fit for us to fund this expedition and the IWDG. The full name of our signature collection is Inis the Energy of the Sea. Inis was inspired by the sea, so it's nice to give back, in our small way, to the source of that inspiration. "



David Cox, Managing Director of Inis the Energy of the Sea – Fragrances of Ireland

Anyone and everyone can follow the journey at www.seathebeauty.net , an ocean conservation portal and blog curated by the ocean lovers on the Inis staff. It will feature daily updates and video snippets from the expedition. Followers will be able to track the Celtic Mist research boat and see the goings-on of the crew, experience whale and other wildlife sightings of the day, and find out some easy, everyday ways we can all help protect our oceans.

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For further information, please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

About Inis the Energy of the Sea – Fragrances of Ireland

Inis the Energy of the Sea is the unisex signature fragrance collection from the boutique perfumery, Fragrances of Ireland. Inspired by the beauty and energy of the wild western coast of Ireland, Inis means 'island' in Irish. Family owned and operated since 1983, Inis-Fragrances of Ireland is devoted to the independent market. In support of local businesses, it is our privilege to partner with unique shops and small enterprises around the world.

About the Irish Whale & Dolphin Group:

Founded in 1990, the IWDG is a registered charity (No. CHY11163), dedicated to the conservation and better understanding of whales, dolphins and porpoises. For nearly three decades, the IWDG has studied cetaceans in Irish waters, contributing scientific data and interpretation to conservation efforts.

Interviews, photos and videos are available on request.