



Media Release

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Whale doco premiere: proof of non-lethal research success

NHNZ's latest documentary *Hunting the Ice Whales* premieres this Wednesday, 4th July, at the joint Australian and New Zealand Marine Sciences Conference (AMSA-NZMSS 2012) in Hobart.

The documentary is the remarkable story of the 2010 Antarctic Whale Expedition - a shared venture between Hobart-based Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) and New Zealand's key marine and Antarctic research agencies - which proves it's possible to conduct research on whales without killing them.

Hunting the Ice Whales takes viewers on a dynamic rollercoaster ride through the Southern Ocean, following a team of scientists led by top marine mammal researcher Nick Gales, as they battle horrendous conditions to implant satellite tags and retrieve whale biopsies. In the short window of opportunity open to them, the crack team were able to track the whales' feeding habits in the Antarctic environment. They managed to gather unprecedented data on where these great leviathans feed during the Antarctic summer, doubling their body weight.

NHNZ producer Max Quinn says to have the world first premiere of the film at the marine sciences conference at Hobart –the main hub for Australian Marine science and home of Australia's Antarctic Division – provides a perfect match, and couldn't be timed better.

"The marine conference brings together a group of key people who have keen interest in these areas of research. For them to be the first to see the show on the big screen is fitting. Also, the premiere happens at the same time as the International Whaling Commission's Annual Meeting in Panama City draws to a close. Given the science behind the documentary, it proves there is no longer any excuse for Japan or any other country to conduct lethal research on whales in order to obtain accurate research results."

For Max, a veteran filmmaker with 15 polar documentaries under his belt, filming *Hunting the Ice Whales* was "one of the most dramatic shoots" of his career. He not only witnessed ground-breaking scientific research into one of the world's most controversial environmental issues, but also endured the worst weather conditions he has experienced in Antarctica.

Dr Tim Lynch, chair of the Marine Sciences Conference organising committee, says the documentary is an excellent example of the strength of collaboration between New Zealand and Australian researchers.

"We're proud to have the film premiere as a part of our conference in view of its strong collaborative approach between Australia and New Zealand researchers and its relevance to the theme, 'Marine Extremes and Everything in Between', of AMSA-NZMSS 2012," says Dr Lynch.

A short introduction from AAD Director Tony Fleming and from New Zealand marine scientist Rochelle Constantine, who appears in the documentary, will precede the screening.

The premiere, which is free and open to the public, will screen in the Plenary Hall Theatre of the Conference Centre at Wrest Point at 9.00 pm on Wednesday 4th July, 2012.

Hunting the Ice Whales is being distributed to broadcasters around the world by Off the Fence.
www.offthefence.com

Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zt1kpkDTL-A>

NHNZ

NHNZ is a major global producer of factual television creating over 100 hours each year of original content for National Geographic Channels, Discovery Channels, Smithsonian Channel, A&E Television Networks, 3net and NHK (Japan). Highly regarded for its 30-year plus natural history heritage, more recently NHNZ has branched out to other factual genres with hit shows like *I Survived* for A&E's Bio Channel. The company's storytelling prowess has been recognized with more than 250 international awards including Emmy awards and the prestigious Wildscreen Panda. In addition to its base in Dunedin, New Zealand, NHNZ has offices in Beijing and Washington DC, and controlling stakes in Singapore production company Beach House Pictures and South African-based Aquavision.
www.nhnz.tv

AMSA-NZMSS 2012

<http://www.amsa-nzmss2012.com.au/>

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