

## BLUE WHALE NAMED IN HONOR OF FRED BENKO

This distinctive blue whale was named “Fred Benko” by Cascadia Research in honor of Fred’s passion, devotion, and contribution to the appreciation of blue whales. This whale was chosen for Fred because of its frequent sightings in the Santa Barbara Channel going back many years and also sightings off Baja California, another area Fred like to go to fish. Originally given the much less colorful identification of 1139 by Cascadia and BB#229 and CICI#590 by Mexican researchers, this whale has been positively identified over 30 times going back to the earliest identification in 1991. Sightings have been in the winter-spring in the southern Sea of Cortez and in the summers off California primarily in the Santa Barbara Channel,

but as far south as San Diego and north to the Gulf of the Farallones. With the frequent sightings in the Santa Barbara Channel starting in 1992 and through the 1990s and the early 2000s when Fred was frequently the captain of the Condor and then the Condor Express, there is no doubt that the two of them came across each other many times. Fred supported blue whale photo-identification research by inviting researchers on board the Condor and Condor Express to take photographs. John Calambokidis fondly recalls Fred’s help in his early research in the Santa Barbara Channel in the early 1990s when he would invite John to stop by the Condor so he could talk to the passengers (Fred would have the galley prepare food

for him since he knew John tended to forget to bring food). Fred always wanted to learn the latest research on blue whales both to satisfy his own curiosity as well as to share with his passengers. He would never miss a chance to host a gathering at his house to hear about the latest information. This whale will be particularly easy to follow because like Fred, this whale has a distinctive look. It has an almost white dorsal fin and some small dark scars indicative of a killer whale attack at an early age (apparent in the photograph taken 26 June 2005 in the Santa Barbara Channel).

*Presented in memory of Fred Benko on behalf of Cascadia Research on 14 March 2013.*

