

Project Update: February 2006

The 2006 field season of the Alfaguara Project conducted by Centro de Conservacion Cetacea (CCC) began the first week of February and has been successfully developed until date. A week after starting field work in the northwest of Chiloé Island, we received a message from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirming the official sponsorship of this institution to the Alfaguara Project.

With the support of local artisan fishing communities we have been able to develop seven marine surveys, photographing more than 70 whales and registering feeding behaviour of different individuals of blue whales, sei whales and humpback whales. Additionally, with the cooperation of local people we constructed a small land based sighting platform to monitor the presence of whales groups and their daily movements.

We are also working to ensure the involvement of local communities in the development of responsible marine ecotourism, including a social survey that will help us identify their needs, concerns and interests regarding the growth of ecotourism and the potential threats to the conservation of this area. The information will be used as a basis for designing a comprehensive management plan proposal of the area.

Dr. Carole Carlson invaluable cooperation in scientific activities and a field visit of a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has contributed in strengthening national and international cooperation. We are sure all the positive work done so far will translate in effective conservation for Chilean cetaceans.