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OrcaLab News - January 11, 2000
Corky Update from San Diego



Hello everyone,

To begin this new year, below are some notes about Corky from two friends of hers in San Diego who visit regularly.

"You probably already know that her front teeth are totally worn down and that she has a cataract in her right eye; however, she has had these since she lived at Marineland of the Pacific in Los Angeles.

Corky spends the majority of her days swimming clockwise laps, upside down, in whichever pool she happens to be in. She will swim like this no matter which whales are in the pool with her and what they are doing. Sometimes they join in, but soon swim off. She and the adult male Ulysses are not allowed in the same pool together because Ulysses doesn't seem to like her very much. They can only be placed together if Orkid or Kasatka are also in the pool. Orkid loves Corky and looks out for her (Corky is her step mom). Kasatka just likes to beat up Ulysses.

Kasatka is the dominant whale in the pool. She lets the other whales know she is the boss by raking them with her teeth. Corky tries not to get in her way.

However, because she is in charge, Kasatka likes all the whales to speak in her dialect. When Corky starts making A5 pod calls, Kasatka gets mad. Corky's body has a few rake marks on her side, a few nicks in her dorsal fin, and a small chunk is missing from her right fluke.

Corky gets along best with the younger whales. She plays Nanny when she's not doing laps.

In the shows, Corky is the star. She performs with unparalleled vigour and enthusiasm. No other whale jumps higher or swims faster. During the night shows, she gets really fired up.

She looks MUCH bigger when she's closer to the glass!

Corky is also known for helping newly transferred whales become adjusted to their new home. In a photo taken last November (#5) Corky works her magic on Keet, newly transferred from SW Texas. All day, she would gently caress him and call to him in her native dialect. She was always by his side, and made sure that her good eye was always facing him. Poor little Keet was so afraid to enter the corridor to the medical pool, so Corky would swim in and out of the corridor to show him it was okay. He finally went through by swimming underneath Corky in the mom/calf position.

Corky will swim her laps no matter what. In photo #6 Orkid (who is Orky & Kandu's baby) camps by the gate, hoping she can get in somehow. Orkid is never totally satisfied with the pool she is in. She frequently stops by the gates to talk with the whales in the other pools. If she is really frustrated, she will bang her head on the gate as if it will help her get in with the whale on the other side."

"Things are a bit crowded at Sea World, they now have 9 Orcas. The original six, and the new additions. Sumar, the youngest male from Florida, has lost his orange tint, and is now 18 months old. He has found a friend in Takara and looks healthy and fat. Keto the other young male from Florida is 4 years old. His brother "Keet" is six years old, and temporarily in San Diego until March. He originally came from San Antonio, and will go to SW in Ohio when construction on a new tank is completed.

Today was so magical with Corky.. one of my most memorable times with her. She was in petting pool with Sumar and Takara, the little ones close to the trainers on the surface, and Corky and me down below in the underwater observation area. The park was not very crowded this afternoon and Corky and I connected. She lingered eye to eye with me for what seemed to be forever... as I walked along the window, she followed me, back on forth as I moved my fingers along the glass, and for a moment she stopped, dropped her head down, and was making N4 calls over and over to me. It made a tear flow from my eyes...and maybe it is a natural thing for her but I could also see some white discharge from her eyes flowing in the water. A little girl came up and noticed too, I told her Corky wants to go home, that is why she is crying."

Thanks to Corky's friends in San Diego!!

Happy New Year, & our best wishes to you all,

Paul & Helena.

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