

Dig deep for mates from the deep

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SYDNEY: Summer in the southern oceans is killing season. Just as the whalers are mobilising their fleets, whale enthusiasts, such as photographer Scott Portelli, are preparing to help raise awareness about the plight of Humpback Whales.

The Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club will host Portelli's exhibition of underwater photography to support Greenpeace and The Humane Society International's anti-whaling efforts.

Portelli aims to "unravel some of the underwater mystique of these beautiful animals and bring them to a wider audience, hopefully inspiring empathy, wonder to further the message of conservation".

"Whaling is an unnecessary and unsustainable practice," said Portelli. "I've spent the last 5 years photographing these Humpback Whales and studying their behaviour. I wanted to share my first hand experience of their grace and beauty."

The exhibition coincides with the Japanese whaling season in Antarctica. Despite pressure by Australia, last June's talks at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) saw an end to the moratorium on commercial whaling. Combined with Japan's ongoing scientific whaling, this paves the way to widespread whaling practices,

Libby Eyre, a whale researcher at Macquarie University with over 20 years experience, agrees with Portelli that scientific killing is 'unnecessary'.

"Due to technology and sustainable research techniques there is simply no need to kill a whale to study it," said Ms Eyre. "And the past has shown us that whaling nations keep increasing their quotas and can't be trusted to manage their industry."

Portelli hopes that, "by reading about whaling, talking about it, going to exhibitions – tourism and cultural exchange results in a transmission of ideas and interests. We can make a difference everywhere by increasing our own understanding."

"I believe no effort is too small," said Portelli. "This exhibition is my small part to generate some interest in Humpback Whales and hopefully raise some money to help in this ongoing struggle."

The Whales in Paradise exhibition runs over 3 weekends, Saturday and Sunday, from 20th January to 4th February. The 19th will launch with speakers, including Ms Eyre, on whaling and the environment, and art auctions to raise money for Greenpeace and The Humane Society International.

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For more information contact Scott Portelli on 0402 124 453

or visit: <http://www.whalesinparadise.net>