

## **Information about the IFAW / 'Song of the Whale' intern scheme**

### **Introduction:**

IFAW has owned and operated a whale research vessel ('Song of the Whale') since 1987; a new Song of the Whale, was launched in 2004. The vessel is a unique, 21.5 m purpose-designed and built, non-invasive whale research boat with accommodation for 10 crew.

The 'Song of the Whale' team focuses on conducting non-invasive research on cetaceans, and the team's work is always directly linked to IFAW's animal welfare or conservation priorities. Much of the research is acoustic in nature, involving the use of hydrophones for listening to and tracking cetaceans, but behavioural observation, photography and video tracking are also important parts of the work. The team is well-known for its focus on passive acoustic research and for developing and disseminating new technology and techniques for research, including data logging software, automated acoustic detection systems and video observation techniques.

The SOTW team works in the field for approx. 6 months of the year, each field season lasting 2-3 months. Song of the Whale is equipped to remain offshore for several weeks at a time, although generally trips last from a few days to a week. New interns may be offered a position initially for 2-3 weeks, depending on time-tabling and logistics. **Priority is given to applications from interns from the regions we are working in.**

### **The People:**

The 'Song of the Whale' team is currently made up of 9 staff. It is a multidisciplinary team composed of, a team manager/research director, a skipper, first and second mates, scientists, an education and communications officer and a project assistant. In addition to boat handling experience, the team members have expertise in photography, electronics, acoustics, computing and software design, biology and conservation, database management, survey design and statistics.

The intern scheme, which IFAW has operated since 1987, provides an unusual opportunity for students, scientists and conservationists to gain practical experience of fieldwork on a dedicated research vessel, working alongside the full-time team. IFAW supports the intern scheme by providing board and lodging for interns while on the boat, and may assist with travel expenses too.

### **The Projects:**

The 'Song of the Whale' team undertakes a variety of projects, which often incorporate and combine aspects of scientific research and conservation with education, public awareness and policy work. Previous projects have included:

- multi-year projects in the Azores and Caribbean, assisting with the development of appropriate whale watching industries, and conducting public awareness campaigns as well as research into the distribution and status of cetaceans;
- surveys to assist in the designation of marine mammal sanctuaries in Ireland and the Mediterranean;
- investigations of the acoustic behaviour of right whales and photo-identification studies of right whales off the east coast of North America, aimed at reducing ship strikes;
- acoustic surveys for harbour porpoises in Europe and Canada.

The team has also been involved in efforts to rescue whales tangled in fishing gear.

### **What to expect:**

At sea the vessel operates according to a combined research and navigation watch system, which operates round the clock. Every-one onboard is involved in all aspects of the work when in the field, including data collection, photography, steering the boat and sail handling, data entry, observation, outreach and open days, cooking and cleaning. The full-time IFAW team is also involved in directing research, liaising with the media, conducting educational presentations, and assisting with maintaining the boat and equipment.

**Requirements for interns:**

- demonstrable enthusiasm and interest in marine life and conservation is essential
- interest in computers, electronics and databases is useful
- ability to get on with a team in cramped and uncomfortable conditions 24 hours a day, every day, is essential
- ability and willingness to undertake activities such as climbing ladders, winching sails and extended periods of observation, often in adverse weather conditions
- sense of humour
- formal qualifications, though useful, are less important than interests and expertise in relevant fields.

**Application process:**

More information about Song of the Whale and the team can be found at [www.ifaw.org/sotw](http://www.ifaw.org/sotw)  
Interested potential applicants are required to fill out an application form and return with a covering letter or email and CV to [sotwteam@ifaw.org](mailto:sotwteam@ifaw.org) or to Bridget Jones, Song of the Whale Research Team, IFAW, 87-90 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UD,.