

Dear Silver Bank prospect,

Thank you for your interest in a "Whales of the Silver Bank" expedition. I'm sure that you will find that this will be one of your most exciting and memorable adventures. To observe these majestic mammals in their natural habitat during their mating and calving season is without a doubt one of the most overpowering experiences you will ever have. I would like to give you a brief background and explanation of what you'll encounter if you decide to join us on one of these unbelievable expeditions.

The North Atlantic Humpback Whale spends between eight to nine months a year in the North Atlantic feeding on copepods, sand lance, krill and herring. As opportunistic feeders, humpbacks gorge down their prey when they can find it and go through periods of fasting when their prey isn't available. Known as gulpers, humpback whales can consume plus or minus a ton of food a day.

During the winter months an uncontrollable desire to migrate south overcomes the North Atlantic Humpback Whale. Why they migrate is unknown, but we do know they travel to numerous mating and calving areas in the Antilles. We may never know why these mammoth mammals migrate south on a yearly basis, but one thing is for certain, females go into estrus during this time frame and the males' testosterone is overflowing, creating one of nature's most exciting arenas of courtship.

The behavior patterns of the humpback whale in the northern latitudes typically defines a gentle giant, fattened from foraging and opportunistically gathering enough prey to sustain its winter migration period without lack of sustenance. During their winter gathering in the Antilles the females typically remain gentle and flirtatious, but the males become vocal, extremely surface active, aggressive, brutal and competitively enlivened.

The most outstanding characteristic of the humpback whale, as viewed by the majority of mankind, is its ability to vocalize in song. All humpbacks can vocalize. Females warn off or solicit new escorts, calves communicate with their mothers, but it is the male who produces a song as a solicitation to entrance the females into courtship. This bird like song structure ranges from the upper end to the near bottom of human hearing, organized, complex and wild. The sounds that they produce range from growls to chirps, moans and high, wistful, pure tones with an endless cycle of hours or even days. The waters of the Antilles are harmoniously alive with the songs of the humpback whale during the mating and calving season. You will be actively involved as we digitally record the songs and communication that you hear during this time frame. Our hydrophone will introduce you to vocalizing males in search for an agreeable female as your chest vibrates and ears tingle from the strength of their song.

Humpback whales are known to be extremely surface oriented during this time frame. Numerous breaching behaviors, lob tailing and fin slapping are some of the postures you will witness on a daily basis, but what really makes the surface activity so special this time of year are the rowdy groups. Male humpbacks position themselves next to females with the untiring desire to copulate. This is what their entire season boils down to, securing their position next to a female and protecting that position from any challenging whale or whales in the area. If a challenger moves into the area, the escort will display surface postures to warn off all competitors. If this is unsuccessful, a rowdy group or competitive group will form where they will utilize their pectoral fins and swat at each approaching whale, ram into each other or breach on top of each other with the sole purpose of positioning themselves next to the female. This can become a staggering spectacle when you witness six or more challengers vying for a position next to a desirable female with one energized escort separating them from their conquest. Combine their overzealous surface activity with singing and rowdy group behavior witnessed only during this time period and you have an ocean exploding with vibrancy in one of this hemispheres last frontiers.

One of the highlights of your adventure will be when you have the opportunity to slip into the water to experience a *soft-in-water* encounter with these magnificent mammals. Trying to express in words the feelings you will experience, as a mother with a calf slipstreaming along her back, gliding by you, is an impossible task with no words doing justice to this sensation. Visualize a female with escort, acrobatically spiraling around you for hours, as she toys with your presence, playfully returning to your position while totally in control of her body movements. The sheer thought of a thirty to fifty foot mammal coming to you, on their terms, in their domain, allowing you to share their world, is dreamlike in nature, but dreams do come true everyday on a "Whales of the Silver Bank" expedition.

As you can see your days on the Silver Bank are filled with excitement and opportunity. Keep in mind, there are good times and there are slow times, but there are rarely bad times. During the evening you will relax aboard in the comfort of the "M/V Turks & Caicos Explorer II" as you enjoy educational slide shows, videos and audio recordings that will assist you in understanding the theories, behaviors and anatomy of the North Atlantic Humpback Whale.

I hope that I have continued to keep your interest in a "Whales of the Silver Bank" expedition. I have included in this package detailed information to assist you in getting a better understanding of what to expect during this very special week on the Silver Bank. After making your reservation we will supply you with a preparation package with particulars concerning airline information, transfers, what to bring, where to meet the ship, and numerous other details to assist you in making your adventure a smooth and comfortable experience. Please don't hesitate to call us if you any further questions concerning the "Whales of the Silver Bank" expeditions at Telephone (954) 382-0024, Fax (954) 382-0042, Cell (954) 895-5782 E-mail: [whales@aquaticadventures.com](mailto:whales@aquaticadventures.com) or visit our Web Site: [www.aquaticadventures.com](http://www.aquaticadventures.com)

See you on the Silver Bank,

Captain Thomas L. Conlin