

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Thursday 16 March 2017

Old whaling records shine light on the life of humpback and sperm whales

The chance discovery of a unique set of whaling records dating back to 1952 has provided new insights into the lives and physiology of humpback and sperm whales.

IMAS PhD student Lyn Irvine heard from a retired whaler about the records, which detail the activities of the Cheynes Beach Whaling Station in Western Australia between 1952 and 1978, and tracked down the hand-

" Analysis of lipid storage also shows that some pregnant female humpback whales delay their departure from their Antarctic feeding grounds to maximise their energy stores to satisfy the high costs of gestation and lactation.

" Smaller pregnant females, however, do not accumulate as much energy as larger females and are therefore more vulnerable to nutritional stress during migration.

" This research has provided new insights into the life history strategies of large whales, and its findings will help us to better understand the potential impacts on whales of environmental change.

" Now that whaling has ended, such a large and detailed dataset on cetacean energy stores will likely never be collected again," Ms Irvine said.

The research is available at <http://rsos.royalsocietypublishing.org/lookup/doi/10.1098/rsos.160290>

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