

# HUMPBACK WHALES

2010 Whale Watching Season

Southern hemisphere humpback whales often have unique white patterns on their bodies, making them relatively easy to identify. I named this calf "White Stripe" during the 2008 season.

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## Mother/ Calf Pair ID Project Vava'u, Kingdom of Tonga

I have been ID-ing and counting humpback whale mother/ calf pairs for several years in Vava'u, Kingdom of Tonga. This started as something I did for fun, but it has since developed into a more meaningful effort.

In the past two years, I've put together PDF summaries of the whale IDs and posted them to my [blog](#) to make the

information freely available to all interested parties.

In 2008, I documented [16 pairs](#). In 2009, there were [31 distinct mother/ calf units](#).

In 2009, I also commenced marking GPS coordinates for all sightings. I tabulated the data and posted the information to a [Google Map](#), again for anyone who is interested to see.

I received photo and data contributions from several other people in the 2009 season, which resulted in five additional confirmed mother/ calf IDs on top of the 26 IDs I established.

The purpose of this note is to ask for your help with this ID project during the 2010 humpback whale watching season in Tonga, if you are fortunate enough to visit the Vava'u area.

For more information please contact: [tony@tony-wu.com](mailto:tony@tony-wu.com)

## What I'm Looking For:

1. Underwater images showing entire left and/ or right side + any unique markings for mother and/ or calf
2. Underwater photographs showing genital area of calf
3. Underwater photographs of accompanying escort(s)
4. Above-water photographs of dorsal fins, unique markings, flukes (to accompany u/w photos)
5. GPS coordinates + date + time of all sightings

My primary objective is to have a series of clear photographs which show unique patterns/ markings for a given mother and calf pair that can be used without ambiguity for ID purposes.

Photographs need to be high resolution, taken with good digital cameras (preferably DSLRs), with proper exposure and framing.

Please understand that blurry photos of vague whale shapes in the distance are not sufficient for identification.

For every set of photographs, I need GPS coordinates + date + time of sighting so I can cross-check with other sightings. Encounters with the same mother/ calf pair over several days are common, and having the GPS coordinates + date + time is useful to document the whales' movements over time.

Finally, please note that I do not receive money or any other support to do this, and I have no affiliation to any research entity, NGO or any other such organisation.



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This mother and calf pair is from the 2006 season. In this case, I referred to the mother as "White Wing". We had multiple encounters with this pair.



This is "Hina Hina", the first calf spotted in Vava'u during the 2007 season.

I will be in Tonga from late July until 18 September 2010.

Sometime thereafter, probably toward the end of September, I will post a PDF summary of all of my 2010 mother/ calf pair IDs to my blog.

Before you send me any photographs or other information/ questions, please look at my summary and cross-check to see if your photos match any of the ones I've already ID-ed.

If your photos don't match any of them mother/ calf pairs in my initial 2010 summary, then it's possible that you have ID-ed a new humpback mother and calf pair.

## When & How To Send Me Information:

1. When: After I post my initial 2010 ID summary (probably late September 2010) to [www.tonywublog.com](http://www.tonywublog.com)
2. How: Email the relevant information (**low-res only!**) to [tony@tony-wu.com](mailto:tony@tony-wu.com)

## Reference Material:

Please take a look at my 2008 calf summary and 2009 calf summary for reference. Please also refer to my Google Map of mother/ calf IDs from 2009 to see why I need the GPS coordinates + date + time for each sighting.

[2008 Calf ID Summary](#)

[2009 Calf ID Summary](#)

[2009 Calf ID Google Map](#)

If your ID is a new mother/ calf pair, you get naming rights for the calf. In general, I don't name the mom, unless there's something really special.

If your photos do match one of the pairs I've already identified, you may be able to help add an additional date/ time/ location point for the relevant mother/ calf pair.

Both types of data are useful!!!

Please don't send me any information until after I post my summary. I won't be able to process the data.

Thank you very much for your help!

**Note:** Please follow the instructions provided by your whale watch operator, and take care not to harass the whales in any manner. No photograph is worth upsetting the whales or getting injured.

For more information please contact: [tony@tony-wu.com](mailto:tony@tony-wu.com)