

Dal joins fight to save the whales

BY ANDREA WARD

In November, students in the Department of Biology at Dalhousie University joined ranks with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Nova Scotia Natural History Museum in the crusade to "Save the whales." These organisations are affiliated with the Nova Scotia Stranding Network.

The Nova Scotia Stranding Network, which was established in 1990, collects data on dead or live stranded creatures such as animals seen floating or animals caught in fishing gear. This data is used for monitoring the number of marine mammal strandings and species-involved incidental catches, as well as the geographi-

cal and seasonal distribution of such events. Necropsies are performed to: establish the cause of death; collect samples for toxicology, parasitology, and genetic analysis; and to establish life history and feeding habits. Skeletons are then donated to museums, parks, schools and various teaching institutions.

In December, the Dalhousie chapter responded to their first marine emergency: a 46-foot fin back whale was found on the coast of Cape Breton. The animal was already dead so detailed information could be gathered. This data included: length; coloration; dorsal fin size, shape and position (or absence of a dorsal fin); blubber thickness; whether or not

teeth or baleen were present; and the number of throat grooves (if any). The information was then entered into a computer database so it would be available to all researchers.

The goals of the N.S. Stranding Network include research, conservation and public awareness, with the long range goal being the prevention of marine emergencies.

The Dalhousie Chapter of the N.S. Stranding Network is funded through the DSU, DSS and the Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group. If you have any questions or are interested in more information you can email Sasha Hooker at shooker@is2.dal.ca.

Tracking The Scent Program

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

Dalhousie's scent reduction program, *We Share the Air*, is moving us ever closer to cleaner air. Launched last September, the program beseeches University faculty and staff to refrain from wearing scented personal products because of the products' potential negative effects on the health of staff and faculty.

"I think Mount A. was bad for me just because I was in residence and there was so much dust and mold in the air," said Meekalai Kumanan, a third year Chemistry student at Dalhousie. "I was in the buildings all the time. It was a sick environment."

Kumanan spent her first year of university at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, but was advised by her doctor to leave after her first year because the air quality at the university was aggravating her asthma.

Kumanan has since transferred to Dalhousie and finds the air quality much better here. "Most people are really into the 'No scents is good sense' idea," she said.

Unlike limiting smoking areas, a program like this one cannot be fully policed or en-

forced. The success of the program relies solely on the cooperation of students and staff. A significant proportion of people are not cooperating; perfumes and colognes can be noticed in almost any room on campus.

"I was walking through the Computer Centre the other day," said Kumanan, "and this girl walked by me wearing huge amounts of perfume. I could feel my airways tightening up."

Wearing fragrances has become as natural to most people as wearing clothes, and it is hard to make them realize it may be harmful to those around them.

"I was walking through the Computer Centre the other day," said Kumanan, "and this girl walked by me wearing huge amounts of perfume. I could feel my airways tightening up."

Another aspect of the *We Share the Air* program is to encourage the Physical Plant to use scent-free cleaning products. Unfortunately, they are not easy to find.

"Lemon scent in a product like Pledge does nothing to help with cleaning. It is only there because people associate the smell of lemons with cleanliness," said Dalhousie Safety Officer Dr. Bill Louch.

Louch said that the Physical Plant is currently looking at new suppliers for custodial products if their current ones can't provide them with what they want.

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the Gazette

Just what is LUST anyway?

BY NATALIE MACLELLAN

"Soap and LUST...a chemical perspective" was the intriguing title of a recent lecture by Dr. Robert Guy. Intrigued as to what my first year Chemistry prof was doing speaking on such a topic, I settled into a seat in Chem 226 to find out.

I watched with growing anticipation as Dr. Guy prepared to speak.

"What is LUST?" Guy asked. "One of the seven deadly sins," he continued with a sly grin. The audience had no idea what was coming.

Guy placed his first transparency on the overhead projector and I read: "Possible Applications of Surfactants/Leaking Under-

ground Storage Tanks." A chuckle spread throughout the room as everyone slowly caught on. LUST stood for Leaking Underground Storage Tanks. I didn't laugh — maybe because I'm a biology student.

"Now you can all leave," joked Guy. If he hadn't been so obviously joking I might have, but I bailed out on enough of his lectures last year. My curiosity got me into this one, I deserved to stick it out.

Dr. Guy, an analytical chemist, described throughout his lecture his current findings in his search for a technique of cleaning up underground fuel leaks using surfactants (chemical detergents). There are currently about 40,000 underground fuel

tanks in Canada which are leaking or have leaked. This fuel can potentially make its way through the soil into the water table, and thereby contaminate local water supplies.

Dr. Guy's research involves finding an ideal method for using surfactants to dissolve the fuel from the soil. The process also involves removing the surfactants and reversing the process to remove the fuel from the surfactants.

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