

# Western Mariner

*The Magazine of the Coast*



## Ocean Magic:

*New Whale-watching Vessel for Prince of Whales*

**Mid-Vancouver Island Waterfront:  
*French Creek, Nanaimo & Ladysmith***

***The Forrest Family  
of Port Coquitlam***

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# Ocean Magic

## New Whale-watching Vessel for Prince of Whales

by Rob Morris



The all-aluminum RHIB-derivative **Ocean Magic** measures 61'10" x 18'4" x 7'9" and is fitted with a rigid (non-inflatable) collar formed with rolled aluminum plate (using a 15" radius; collar is 'D' in cross section to create more interior beam) and comprised of six buoyancy chambers each side. A softer marine aluminum alloy was used for the collar than in the hull and superstructure, the intention being that the collar will be creased or dented by the inevitable bumps rather than being punctured. Placing the wheelhouse far forward provides excellent visibility from the helm and maximizes the top-deck seating area. In seas the helmsman will also experience first-hand the shock-loading on the hull and will be able to adjust speed or direction accordingly to soften the ride for his passengers. **Ocean Magic's** heel angle and the lateral forces usually associated with high-speed turns are proving to be minimal which also increases passenger stability and comfort.



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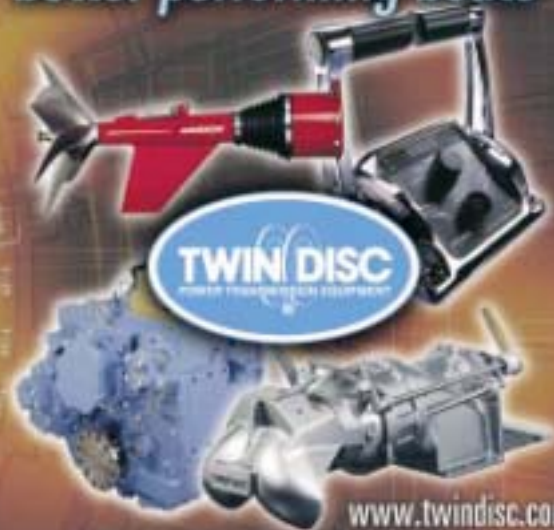
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When Alan McGillivray put his first Daigle Marine-built water taxi, the **Inter Island Eagle**, into service in 1993, it was a real eye-catcher. Painted the high-visibility yellow he'd seen on the fire-trucks in Victoria, BC, the boat could be spotted miles away. Always with a keen eye for marketing, McGillivray explained that strong reactions to the bright colour were, "Just fine, we want the **Inter Island Eagle** to stick in people's minds!"

Inter Island Launch, McGillivray's Sidney, BC-based company, offered a variety of services from sightseeing and freighter crew changes to overnight courier and a paper route through the southern Gulf Islands, with the occasional wedding party thrown into the mix. In 1994 the **Prince of Whales**, a second 12-passenger water taxi from Daigle Marine, was acquired to expand the business. As the name indicates, McGillivray was preparing to diversify into whale-watching in southern Vancouver Island waters.

The number of companies involved in marine ecotourism out of Victoria Harbour increased rapidly through the latter 1990s. A couple of large pods of Orcas (killer whales), resident year-round in the waters adjoining the southern Strait of Georgia and the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, plus the large tourist population in Victoria particularly during the summer season, combined to support a burgeoning whale-watching industry based on the city's waterfront.

As one of the earlier whale-watching companies in Victoria Harbour, Alan McGillivray's **Prince of Whales Whale Watching** started with the two 12-passenger water taxis and steadily expanded its fleet with high-speed, 12-passenger RHIBs, the vessel-of-choice with most whale-watching companies. Now **Prince of Whales'** newest vessel, the **Ocean Magic**, is turning heads in much the same way the **Inter Island Eagle** did over 10 years ago.

The 75-passenger **Ocean Magic** is a striking design and is one of the largest, both in size and passenger capacity, in the BC whale watching fleet. Credit must go to the builder, Sylte Shipyard in Maple Ridge, BC, for completing construction in a very tight 4-1/2 months and in time for **Ocean Magic** to participate in the peak tourism and whale-watching season. Erling Sylte had a full-time crew of eight on the job and they completed all fabrication and interior and systems installations on **Ocean Magic** with the excep-



Photo by Rob Morris

*Shamus Baier at the helm of **Ocean Magic**. Shamus and senior skipper Mike Randall have their Master Limited (under 60 gross tons) tickets and are crewing together during the familiarization period with the new vessel. The electronics, supplied by Victoria Marine Electric, include: JRC 1500 Mk II and Furuno 1942 Mk II radars; Sitec AIS radar receiver; Furuno LS 41 depth sounder; Nobeltec Navigation Suite/GPS chart plotter; Navman T5100 GPS chart plotter; Simrad RD-68 VHF-DSC radio; Furuno LH3000 loud-hailer/intercom.*

tion of the electrical work which was sub-contracted to Comar Electrical Services of Port Coquitlam.

The **Ocean Magic**, designed by John Simpson Ltd. of Delta, BC, was inspired by the 48-passenger **Naiad Explorer**, Mackay Whale Watching's successful RHIB derivative design which is based in Port McNeill on northern Vancouver Island (see "RHIBs and RHIB Derivatives" in **Western Mariner**, July 2005).

*The Mackay family congratulates Prince of Whales on the launch of their new vessel Ocean Magic.*

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**Congratulations to Prince of Whales on the launch of the Ocean Magic!**

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## Ocean Magic

Photos by Rob Morris



A variety of outside seating and viewing positions are available to passengers on the top and aft decks. On the main deck, to port and starboard of the stairs, is a galley and two heads. The stairs can be unbolted and removed, clearing access to two soft patches in the deck for engine removal.

“All it took was one ride to convince me!” says Alan McGillivray of his determination that a vessel like **Naiad Explorer** would be best for Prince of Whales Whale Watching. The **Naiad Explorer** started as a RHIB design acquired by Mackay Whale Watching from Naiad Inflatables (New Zealand), then modified to meet the requirements of the owner and Transport Canada Marine Safety by John Simpson. Bill and Donna Mackay are the distributors for Naiad designs in Canada and Bill provided his expertise on the **Ocean Magic** project during the construction, builder’s and sea trials phases. The Naiad designs meet the ABS High Speed Craft rules and **Ocean Magic** has been certified Home Trade III by Transport Canada.

For the speedy, planing-hulled vessels in the Victoria whale-watching fleet, it can be a one-to-two-hour round trip from Victoria to the waters frequented by Orcas, such as the US San Juan Islands. The intervening exposed waters of Haro Strait and the Strait of Juan de Fuca require seaworthy craft that can transport whale-watching customers, many of whom have spent next to no time in small vessels, safely and in reasonable comfort. Alan McGillivray is confident his new vessel will accomplish these ends in all seasons.

Following its leading-edge predecessor, the **Naiad Explorer**, the **Ocean Magic** has now established a new benchmark in vessel designs for the whale-watching and marine ecotourism industry as it continues to grow on both coasts of Canada.

# PRINCE of WHALES

★ *Ocean Magic* ★



**Thank-You for a Beautiful Vessel**

John Simpson Design • Sylte Shipyards

Pacific Surface Drives • Finning Caterpillar • MacKay Whale Watching

Photo: Greg Aspa



The interior of the main deck provides a sheltered seating and viewing area. The forward section is mostly enclosed and heated while the mid-section's sides are open to the ocean environment. Snap-on vinyl windows will cover the openings in less favourable weather.



The **Ocean Magic** logged a 34-knot top speed during sea trials and a 25-knot cruise speed with 70 passengers on board. Propulsion is Twin Disc-Arneson ASD12 BILU SPP (surface-piercing propeller) drives with NiBrAl 35" x 37" five-bladed propellers supplied by Pacific Surface Drives, Richmond, BC. The drives provide full trim adjustment to passenger loading. The SPP props also have a very low under-water sound signature, an increasingly important consideration in the whale/marine mammal-watching industry. (The SPP propeller's low sound signature was first noticed when picked up on hydrophones in Johnstone Strait as the Arneson SPP drive-equipped RCMP patrol catamarans were passing at high speed.) **Ocean Magic's** main engines are 800 hp (@ 2300 rpm) Caterpillar 3406 E diesels with mechanically-actuated fuel injection and engine control/monitoring with the Caterpillar ECM (electronic control module). The Twin Disc MGX 5114 2:1 marine transmissions are combined with the new Twin Disc EC 300 electronic engine controls. They have an Express mode which achieves clutch control similar to a trolling valve. Automatic two-stage oil-pressure delivery allows the clutches to slip and propeller revolutions to drop to the 100 rpm range for slow-speed manoeuvring near whales and in dock approaches.



The crew of the **Ocean Magic** after completing their new vessel's tenth whale-watching trip in early July, 2005. Left to right: Alan McGillivray (owner, Prince of Whales Whale Watching); Andrew Morris (passenger); Nicola Hughson (marine mammal naturalist/deck-hand); Mike Randall (skipper); Shamus Baier (deck-hand, skipper-in-training).



Prince of Whales Whale Watching's **Ocean Magic** tied up at the Greater Victoria Harbour Society's new Ships Point commercial pick-up/drop-off float with one of the company's 10 RHIB whale-watchers. Out "on the grounds" the whale-watching vessel skippers largely cooperate in the exchange of information on locations of the highly mobile, wide-ranging Orcas. Back in the harbour the whale-watching companies compete to put tourist "bums in the seats". The **Ocean Magic** has the passenger capacity of six whale-watching RHIBs plus a layout designed for extended, comfortable operation through the tourism shoulder and winter seasons. The vessel could also fulfil water taxi or freight carrier functions unrelated to marine ecotourism. ◀

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