

**Cetacean Society International**

*Whales Alive!* - Vol. XVI No. 1 - January 2007

---

## **Wyland Sperm Whale Mural Restored in New London**

**By Dr. Robbins Barstow, CSI Director Emeritus**

---

Thirteen years ago, in July 1993, the world famous whale artist known by the single name of Wyland, spent one week in New London, Connecticut. He had come east from California to paint a series of giant, life-size whale murals on exterior building walls in the 15 states along the east coast of the United States.

The "Whaling City" of New London, once second only to New Bedford as an American whaling port, was chosen as the site for his Connecticut mural. The Sperm Whale, the species most hunted by Connecticut whalers in the 1800's, had been designated by the legislature in 1985 as Connecticut's official state animal. So this was the whale that Wyland selected to portray in a monumental painting on the 170-foot long and 40-foot high side of a large store at the corner of Eugene O'Neill Drive and State Street in the heart of the city.



**Wyland's "Whaling Wall" in New London, CT.  
Photo by Brian Chmielecki.**

For more than a decade, Wyland had been painting life-size whale murals on walls in cities around the world as part of a global effort to raise people's environmental consciousness. The New London Sperm Whale painting was his "Whaling Wall #41," created by Wyland

and his crew in just one week's time, using spray paint guns and moveable scaffolding.

The mural was officially dedicated by then Connecticut Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. on July 12, 1993, and became a city landmark and popular tourist attraction.

### **Restoration Needed**

In recent years, the giant painting had been deteriorating due to sunlight, rain, wind, auto emissions and other conditions affecting the wall. In the spring of 2006, there was talk of eradicating the Wyland mural by whitewashing over it and putting something else there instead. This was when an informal committee of local volunteers organized itself to "Save the Wyland Whale Wall."



**Another view of the "Whaling Wall" in New London, CT.  
Photo by Brian Chmielecki.**

As group spokesperson George A. Sprecace, a city physician, told the New London Day, "This came about because several of us, having heard earlier this year that the wall might be painted over or otherwise destroyed, independently said, 'Hell no, it won't go.'"

The small group of dedicated volunteers worked throughout the spring and summer to chip away peeling paint, seal cracks in the building exterior, and repaint portions of the 13-year-old outdoor montage of 60-foot sperm whales and dolphins, fish, and squid. The paint, primer, sealer, caulking, brushes and rollers needed for the job were donated by Dennis O'Connor, Sr., owner of Mystic Paint and Decorating Center, in memory of his late, New London firefighter father.

Other committee members included a retired union painter, Norm Johnson; an author and artist, Dave Bishop, and his son, John; a building owner and City Councilor, Bill Cornish; and a retired school teacher, Tita Williams. The group plans to do maintenance work every

spring to keep the painting in shape.

Rededication ceremonies for the restored Wyland Sperm Whale Mural were held on Wednesday, December 13, 2006, with Mayor Margaret M. Curtin participating. As George Spreccace said, "It shows how just plain people working together can accomplish worthwhile things."

New London residents and visitors will continue now to have their consciousness raised by the sight of these wonders of the deep and be inspired to work toward increased protection and preservation for living whales around the world for future generations to enjoy.

Note: An hour-long, documentary video tape showing "The Making of Wyland's Sperm Whale Mural," in New London, Connecticut, in July 1993, produced by CSI Director Emeritus Robbins Barstow, is available for \$20 from: BTA Films and Video, 190 Stillwold Drive, Wethersfield, CT 06109. Email: RobbinsB@aol.com

---

Go to next article: [CSI Preliminary Annual Report](#) or: [Table of Contents](#).

© Copyright 2007, Cetacean Society International, Inc.

URL for this page: <http://csiwhalesalive.org/csi07108.html>