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AIMING FOR A PERFECT SHOT

Photo cruises offer chance to take close-ups of sea life

By KEVIN HOWE
Herald Staff Writer

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Think of it as a photo safari on the seas.

Cruises for professional and serious amateur photographers have been launched by Randy's Fishing Trips from Fisherman's Wharf.

A preview cruise was recently held aboard the Chubasco, one of Randy's fleet that usually runs fishing or whale-watching cruises from the Monterey Wharf.

The photo expeditions will be operated much differently, according to Sarah Graham, program liaison for Marine Life Gallery, which provides stock photos of whales, dolphins, seals, otters, sea lions and sea birds.

"A photo expedition trip is different from a regular whale-watching trip," she said. On an expedition cruise, "the priority is getting the shot and getting it right."

Captain and crew will aim for finding the most active sea animals in an area and remaining until good photo opportunities occur. A professional photographer will be

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on board to assist other shooters with positioning, lighting, framing and the other factors that make a good photo.

Graham said the idea for the cruises originated with herself, boat captain Danny Frank and nature photographer Bob Talbot. The first full-fledged cruise, an eight-hour "sunrise expedition," will sail Dec. 8.

"The captain knows the animals and can approach them in a way that doesn't interfere with them," she said, something that a photographer in his or her own boat might not know how to do.

In addition, putting to sea with a group of photographers aboard a single vessel cuts down



on the number of boats on the bay and their intrusion into the natural patterns of sea life, Graham said.

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"We'll slowly move up on sea otters or sea lions; we encourage people to use long lenses so we won't get closer than we're allowed."

Photo Expeditions offers two-hour sunrise and sunset trips focusing on light metering and capturing the natural beauty of the bay, Graham said. Other cruises will include two-hour trips to photograph near-shore animals — pinnipeds, sea otters and birds — and three-hour trips for whale and dolphin photography.

Kevin Howe can be reached at 646-4416 or khowe@montereyherald.com.

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