

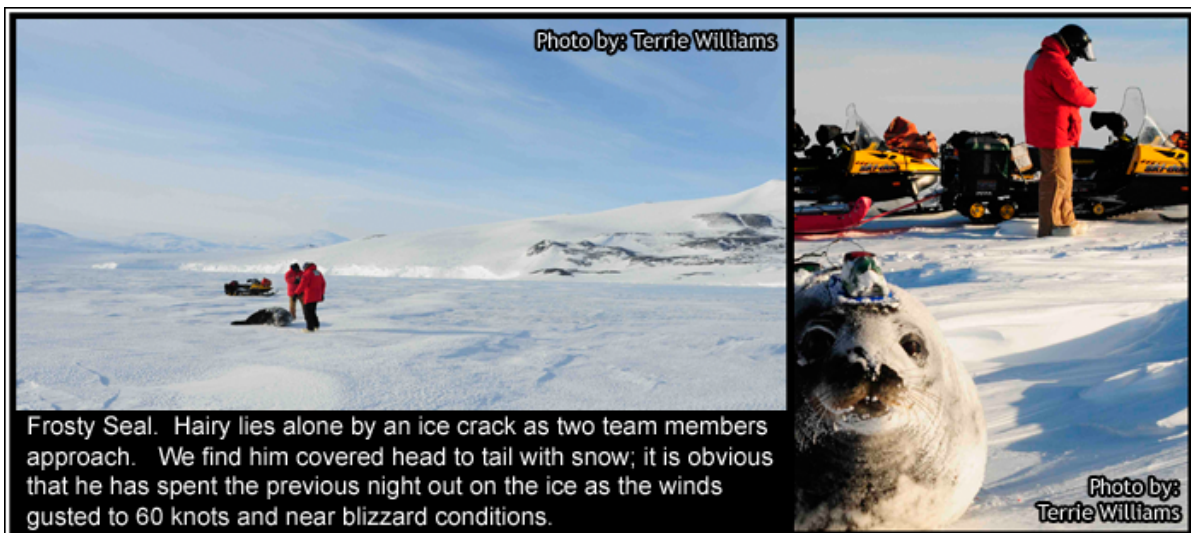


Hairy Potter the Seal and his camera finally make an appearance on ice.

THE RETURN OF HAIRY POTTER

At last the storms subside and the computers awaken to satellite “hits” from one of the seal’s tags. At 3:00 am there is a satellite report that Hairy is somewhere on top of the ice. Curiously, he is the only seal that appears to be out of the water on this post-storm, blustery early morning. Within hours the team members head out on snowmobiles and use Hairy’s beeping radio tag to locate him within the rough sastrugi (ridged areas of snow that make travel treacherous). It takes a strong back as we pitch and twist on the vehicles, slowly picking our way across the blue ice and rough snow.

Hairy is alone, hidden in a snow drifted area that the team drives right by. Realizing our mistake, we circle around and at last find the secretive seal. His body is completely covered in snow and for a moment we wonder if there really is a camera-wearing seal under the snow mound.



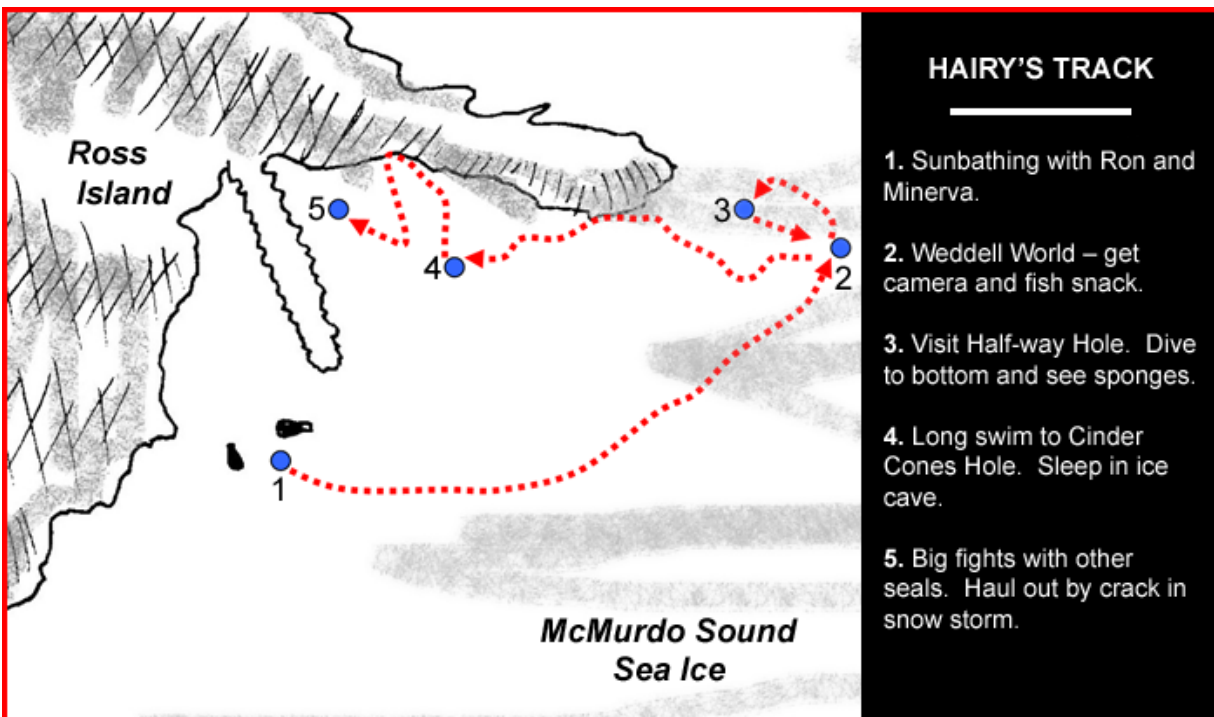
Frosty Seal. Hairy lies alone by an ice crack as two team members approach. We find him covered head to tail with snow; it is obvious that he has spent the previous night out on the ice as the winds gusted to 60 knots and near blizzard conditions.

Suddenly Hairy wakes and shakes off the snow. In short order we remove the camera and instrument pack, leaving Hairy to doze peacefully on the ice as the sun rises in the sky. He takes a deserved break, having carried our camera and recording data for weeks. As for the rest of us, we race back to the laboratory excitedly, wondering what the instruments and videos will tell us.

HAIRY'S ADVENTURE UNDER THE ICE

The instruments all worked!

We quickly learn that Hairy recorded hours of videos and information about his environment while he was under the ice. Although it will take months to analyze all of the data, the team is able to piece together a quick sketch and diary of Hairy's travels. The map below shows that the seal traveled nearly 15 miles, moving between breathing holes at Weddell World, Half-way Hole, Cinder Cones Hole, the coastline tidal crack and Turtle Rock crack.



Hairy's Photo Diary

Photos by: Hairy Potter the Seal

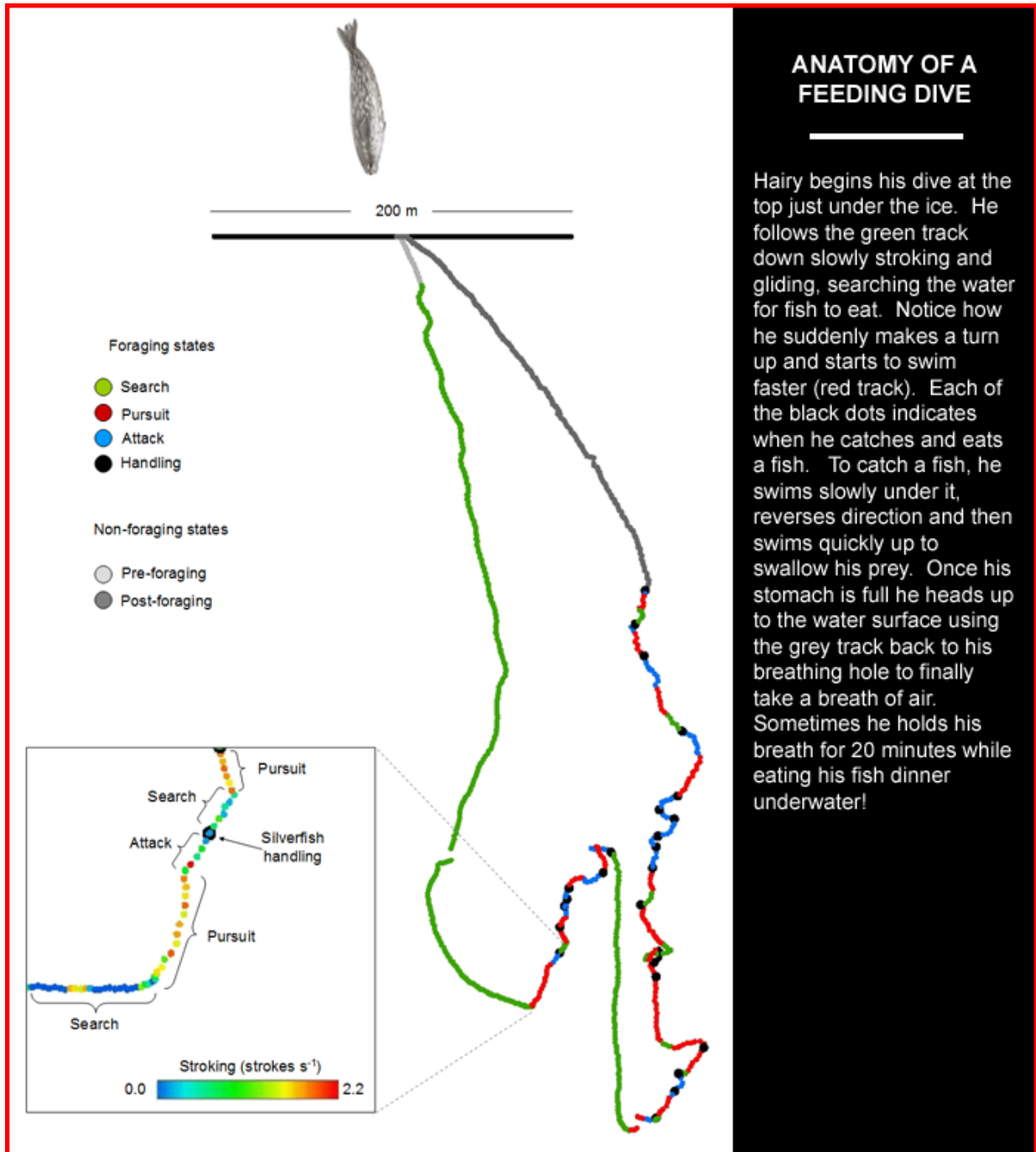
Day 1:

We initially find Hairy sunbathing on the ice surrounded by Tent Island, Inaccessible Island, and an iceberg. This is the same spot favored by Professor Minerva McGonaSeal, Neville LongBottom Dive, and sometimes Ron WeSealey.

Day 2:

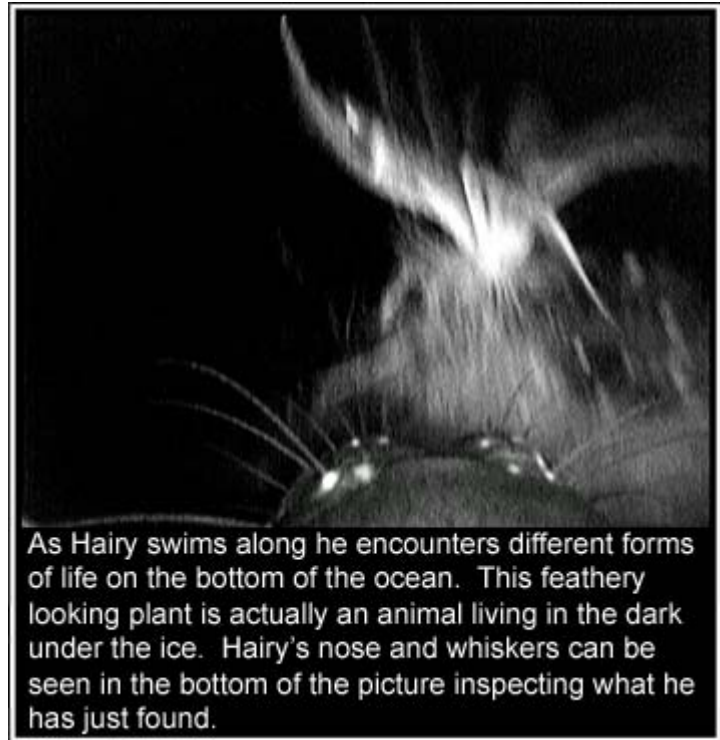
Sporting his new camera Hairy heads out from Weddell World for a dive at dawn. He immediately starts eating Antarctic silverfish (scientific name *Pleuragramma antarcticum*). These small fish are the size of an anchovy, and Hairy gulps them down like popcorn. On each dive he swallows over 15 fish - sometimes headfirst, sometimes tail first, but always whole. He doesn't bother to chew.

The tracks of his dive show that instead of straight swimming lines he meanders and corkscrews through the water while trying to find fish.



Day 3:

After eating, Hairy heads to Half-way Hole (halfway between Weddell World and McMurdo Station on Ross Island). There he dives to nearly 200 meters (219 yards), reaching the bottom of McMurdo Sound. Although it is dark, his large, light-sensitive eyes spot starfish and lots of sponges. He pokes his head into the openings of some of the largest sponges looking for fish that might be hiding from him.

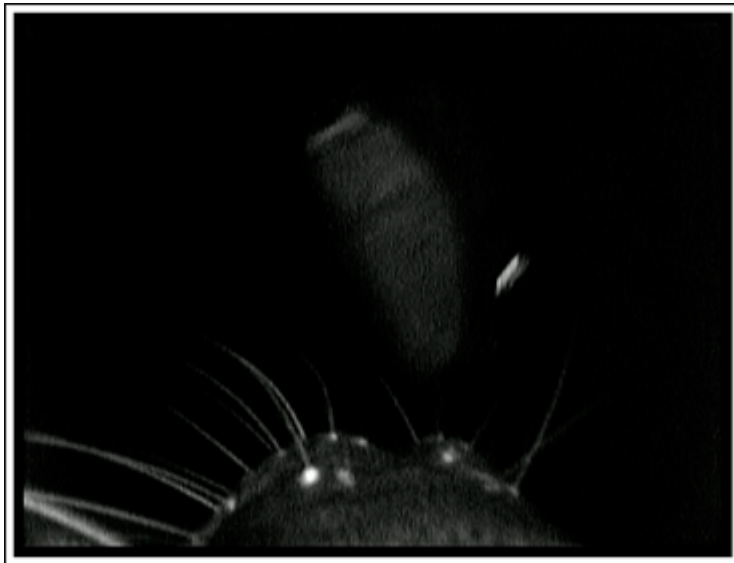


As Hairy swims along he encounters different forms of life on the bottom of the ocean. This feathery looking plant is actually an animal living in the dark under the ice. Hairy's nose and whiskers can be seen in the bottom of the picture inspecting what he has just found.

Day 4:

A BIG swim for Hairy. The seal swims for several miles towards the shallow coastline of Ross Island. Sometimes he hugs the bottom where he skims right above strangely shaped marine animals that look like

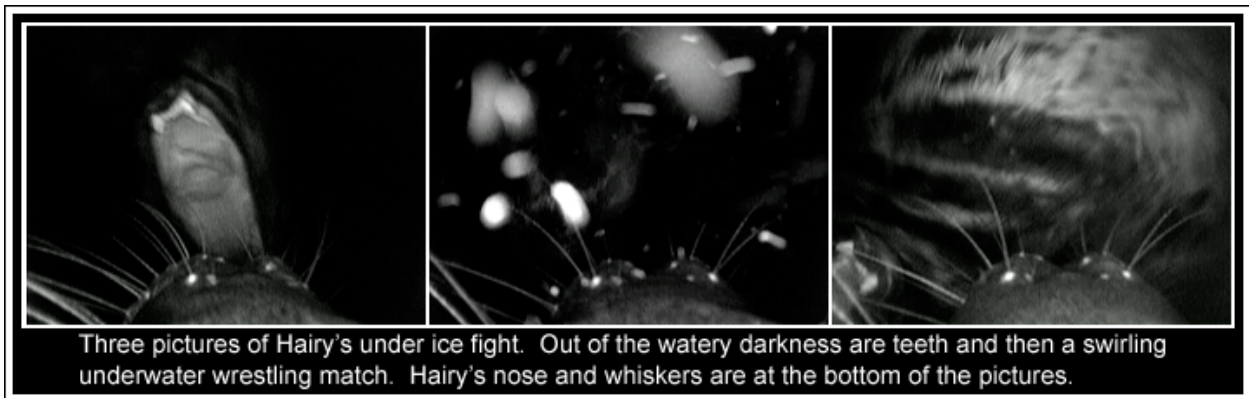
spindly legged spiders and feathery plants. He takes advantage of the large tidal crack by the shore where the sea ice is jumbled. Here he enters an ice cave to breathe and sleep. In his cave he is protected from the raging snowstorms and winds outside.



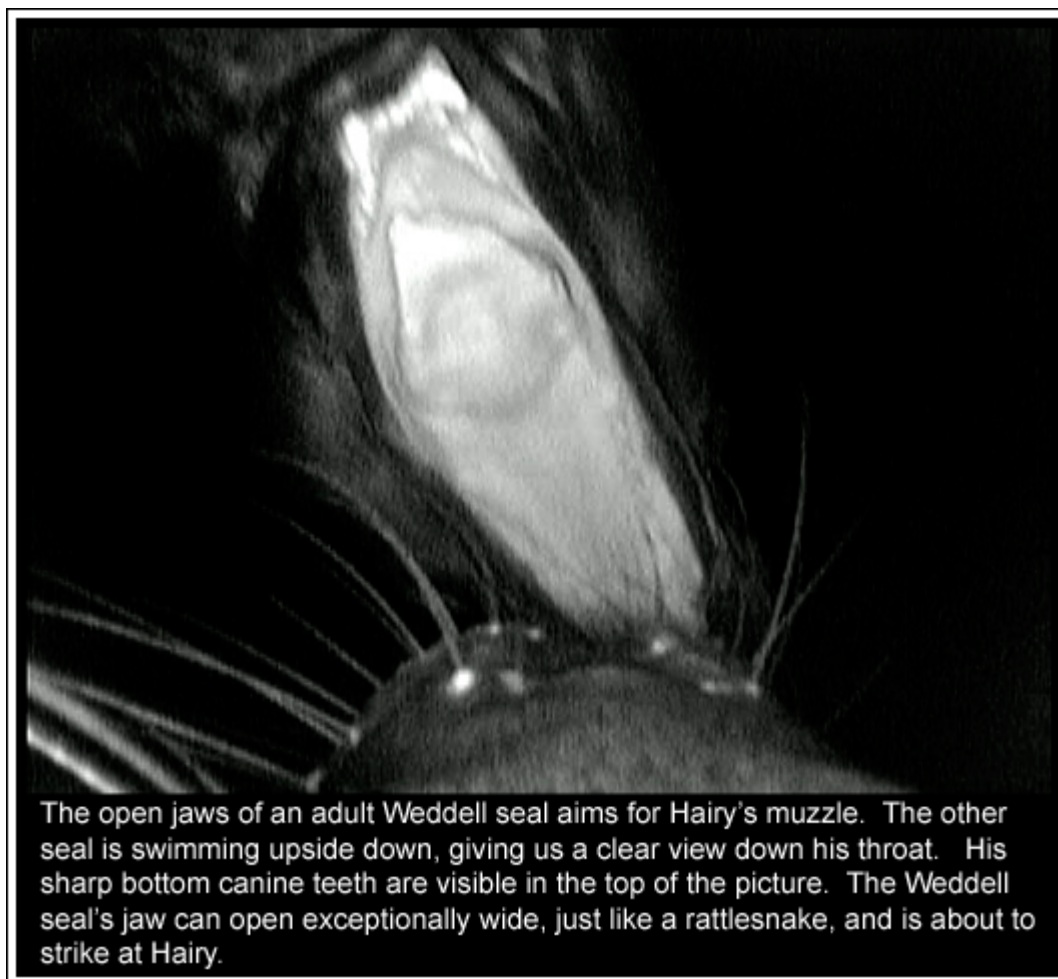
Day 5:

DANGER! Hairy swims into an area by Turtle Rock that is occupied by pregnant seals and the large territorial male seals that guard them. Suddenly there is the bright flash of eye shine in front of him.

Then another and another, and he is soon rolling, snapping and fighting in the water.

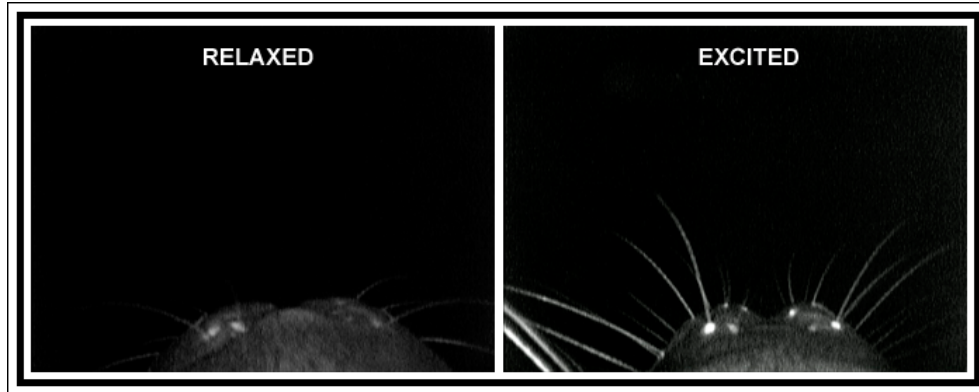


A giant mouth comes at him. When we slow the video down we can see the large teeth of another, much older seal. The same teeth that the seals use to ream breathing holes in the ice are now slashing at Hairy's chest.



WATCH HAIRY'S UNDER ICE BATTLE

After reviewing hours of video our team soon learns to “read” the behavior of Hairy from the shape of his muzzle and position of his whiskers. Compare the two pictures below. On the left Hairy is relaxed; on the right he senses danger or something to eat.



During the following fight sequence, watch Hairy's whiskers. They will tell you when he senses danger coming his way.

YouTube Video: “Night Chills: Hairy Potter the Seal Returns”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opOUh0xRQ9Q>

AFTER THE FIGHT

Although Hairy appears to win the battle and is able to catch a breath of air, we soon realize that he does not escape harm completely. Like his namesake he is scarred. When we find him in the snowdrift, the team notices that his right front flipper is curled under. A normal seal flipper lies flat against the body of the animal. Instead, Hairy's flipper now folds awkwardly backward. Clearly, he has been bitten by one of the other larger, older seals. We now understand why Hairy hauled out onto the ice and weathered a snowstorm alone. He needed time to heal.



Next Week: Heartbreak in Antarctica