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REAL UNICORNS

National Public Radio recently reported on one marine scientist's attempts to study a creature whose very existence has contributed greatly to unicorn lore — the narwhal. These small, arctic-dwelling whales are recognized the world over for their long singular tusks, which protrude from the lips of males and have been passed off for centuries as unicorn horns. Although Inuit people have long hunted narwhal for meat and ivory, little is known about the narwhal and its life under the ice. For the past eight years, Kristin Laidre, Ph.D., from the University of Washington, has spent two weeks each summer on a fjord in Greenland trying to tag a narwhal with a small satellite transmitter. Why? Because the transmitter would record valuable information about everything from migratory patterns to how deep they dive. Laidre has thus far been unsuccessful. The whales are fearful of humans and avoid them at all costs. Undiscouraged, Laidre will return to the fjord again next year to try to tag one of these elusive animals. npr.org



Maine's Jet Set The action stopped and heads turned as we brought *Whistler* to the dock in Rockland, Maine, the day before the Maine Boat Show began last month. *Whistler* is made by Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding in Thomaston, just down the road from Rockland, and this 54-foot beauty would be a showstopper wherever it turned up.

Designed by C. Raymond Hunt Associates, *Whistler* boasts a performance to match the elegant sweep of its sheer line and its classic yet aggressive profile. For performance, we registered 36.7 knots on the GPS coming down the St. George River in a 15-knot wind with 1,000 pounds of fuel on board before we turned left at Port Clyde and headed up to Rockland. That's a result of the Hunt state-of-the-art composite hull and the Hamilton water jets, driven by twin 1,000 hp Caterpillar C18 diesels.

One notable innovation is the garage; push a button and the hydraulic gate lifts up on the transom and a sled extends over the jets so the owner can launch a 10-foot dinghy with ease. The elegant interior is built for a couple, with a master in the bow and a study that converts to a guest cabin. The woodwork and hand-carved embellishments are exquisite. You can drive the boat using traditional controls, a joystick or a hand-size mouse for pinpoint docking. The jets mean only 2 feet 11 inches of draft. They also mean we didn't have to worry about the lobster pots when coming in to the show. lymanmorse.com — Peter A. Janssen



SKIM THE SURFACE Given National Geographic's history of supporting under-sea explorers like Jacques Cousteau, it seems only natural the society would develop its own brand of snorkeling and swimming equipment. National Geographic Snorkeler is a line of masks, snorkels and fins for enthusiasts of all experience levels. All masks feature CE-tempered lenses and lightweight frames. Snorkel mouthpieces have an orthodontic design and splashguard for comfort. Fins are easy to adjust, and they come in an array of blade styles for a variety of snorkeling conditions. \$30 to \$65. natgeosnorkeler.com