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Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society ~ Committee

Chairman	Samuel Hung	Organization coordination
Vice-chairman	Leo Yeung	Research projects and intern affairs
Vice-chairman	Patty Tse	Secretary, administration and finance
Committee member	Winnie Au	Membership affairs
Committee member	Dickson Wong	Volunteer affairs
Committee member	Sammi Ng	Information gathering and publication

Latest status of our Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK

Naughty Chinese white dolphins



On 20 November and 5 December 2003, our research team had a very close encounter with some naughty Chinese white dolphins! Both groups of dolphins were seen off Sha Chau. On our vessel, we saw a lot of splashes from a distance and so we got closer to see what happened. To our surprise, the dolphins swam toward us, circled around our boat and even passed to and fro underneath! They did perform a lot of unexpected tricks like flipping entirely out of water, chasing each other and even raising up fluke above water surface! All these are far more intriguing than the dolphin performances in aquaria. Also, seemingly they were not afraid of us at all. After we had stopped our boat, the dolphins rubbed their bodies against our boat. They were very close to us, some even raised their heads, as if they were trying to see who we were! This kind of experience is not something that one can ask for. We are really lucky that we could have two really close encounters with dolphins in a month!

Ropey was seen again after 5 years

On 18 December 2003, we came across a dolphin that we had not seen for five years off Sham Wat, Lantau – Ropey (NL89)! We were all very excited to see it again! It was in 1998 when researchers last saw Ropey, but since then, it had not been spotted. Researchers once believed Ropey had passed away. But now, Ropey came up in HK waters again! Ropey bears a very distinctive scar, which is rope-like around its dorsal fin. That's why it can be readily identified by researchers in the wild. In 1998, Ropey was still a sub-adult with many spots on its body. Now that it has grown older, it bears fewer spots!

(Photo credit Samuel Hung)



Porpoises come back again



It's time to meet our lovely finless porpoises again in winter! In fact, finless porpoises do swim around in eastern waters of Hong Kong in summer, but only in small number. However, most of them move inshore to Hong Kong in winter time. At peak season, porpoises can be seen every time you pass by South Lantau! In January 2004, researchers spotted the finless porpoises when conducting land-based survey on Chi Ma Wan, Lantau. They occurred in the water between Chi Ma Wan and Shek Ku Chau in groups of 3-5, but only briefly. But to our delight, we have even spotted a finless porpoise calf! We all hope that we can have a closer encounter with them when on boat.

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

The Dolphin Massacre in Japan

Japan has long been notorious for hunting dolphins and whales. Tens of thousands of dolphins are slaughtered by the Japanese every year. Not only do Japanese love to consume the flesh of whales and dolphins, they kill the animals in a very brutal way, outraging environmental groups and animal right activists worldwide.

The Bloody Cove

On 6 October 2003, an organization for marine conservation in the United States, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS), first videotaped and photographed Japanese fishermen slaughtering dolphins



in Taiji Cove, the process of which astounded the whole world. Victims of the kill are mostly Striped



Dolphins; some are adults while some are just calves. It can be clearly seen from the video that fishermen were driving dolphins into the harbour with their boats, and captured them using fishing nets. The dolphins were then pulled up to the boat, and killed one by one. One photo even shows the horrifying scene of the Taiji Cove stained bloody red with the blood of dolphins.

Slaughter Connived

The fishermen reported to the local police at once when they realized that their shameful behaviour was being recorded. The most annoying thing was, even the Japanese Police covered up for the fishermen. Not only did they force the Sea Shepherd crew to leave, the Police also seized their cameras and video recorders in order to stop them from filming the bloody evidence. On 18 November, two Sea Shepherd volunteers could no longer stand the on-going slaughter and swam to one of the pens to release 15 captured dolphins. They were arrested by the Japanese Police and were detained till December.



Nowadays, Japan is one of the few countries in the world which still captures and slays dolphins for their meat. Every year, over two hundred thousand dolphins are slaughtered to death in Taiji Cove. Although the massacred dolphins do not belong to any endangered species, the fishermen do not realize that this kind of operation is not sustainable at all, which will consequently push the dolphins to the brink of extinction.

(Photo credit Brooke McDonald/Sea Sheperd)

For more information concerning the massacre, please visit the following website of the Sea Shepered www.seashepherd.org/taiji.shtml

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Activities in February

Seminar

Date: 7 February 2004 (Sat)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (1/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 2:30 – 3:30 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

3:30 – 4:30 pm (Topic: Chinese white dolphins (Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins) around the world)

Member: Free admission
Non-member fee: HK\$20

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 14 February 2004
Time period: 2pm– 6pm
Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Date: 29 February 2004
Time period: 12pm– 4pm
Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)
Fee for Friend of the Dolphin HK\$250
Fee for Dolphin Pal / Dolphin Elderly: HK\$200
Non-member: must be accompanied by any member, fee: HK\$250

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Join us now ~ to help protect our dolphins!

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- Dolphin Elderly (senior citizen membership)
- Corporate Member
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Activity Review

[Our first Seminar](#)



HKDCS held its first seminar on Chinese white dolphin and finless porpoise in the afternoon of 7 February 2004. On that day, quite a number of our members and dolphin enthusiasts attended the seminar. Although participants were not very many, we were very delighted to have the chance to gather! The talk was given by our chairman, Samuel Hung. It was



divided into two parts, one was an introduction to the two cetacean species of Hong Kong, and the other one covered Chinese white dolphins in different parts of the world. As the second part had never been talked about in public, even we, as the committee members, learned much from this talk! After the talk, many people stayed behind to have a chat with our committee members. Some of them even filled in the form to become our members! We sincerely thank all participants and supporters. We look forward to meeting you all again soon! Please visit our [website](#) for more photos of the seminar!

Dolphin research trip

In the afternoon of 14 February 2004, HKDCS organized its first dolphin research trip.

When our boat got near to Tai O, the first group of dolphins was spotted. As the group was already surrounded by three small boats, we only watched from afar. It seemed as if the dolphins knew that their dolphin buddies had come to visit them, they approached us and “performed acrobatics” for us! We then sailed southward along the coastline of Lantau and passed Yi O, Peaked Hill and Fan Lau. We met some other dolphins on our way. When we got to Fan Lau Tung Wan, we even met a dolphin with two cuts on its dorsal fin. Researchers had encountered this dolphin for a couple of times, but it hadn't been named yet.



We then noticed a pair-trawler in operation off Fan Lau. Researchers spotted that a pod of dolphin were following the trawlers in search of food. When we got closer, we were all stunned! Groups of dolphins totaling over 20 individuals were leaping out of water right in front of us. We could find mother-and-calf pairs, spotted juveniles, and the pinkish adult dolphin. It was such an unforgettable experience to see

them searching for food happily. On that day, as many as 15 sightings were recorded. And we had a good time with our friends at sea on the Valentine's Day.

Please visit our [website](#) for more photos of the dolphin trip! (Photo credit Samuel Hung)

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Latest status of our Chinese white dolphins in HK

A Chinese White Dolphin off Lamma Island!

In the morning of 12 February 2004, we went on a line-transect boat survey to Lamma Island from Aberdeen as usual. Lamma Island is a hot spot for finless porpoises in late winter and early spring every year, so we expected some porpoise sightings that day. After two hours of work, when we started to get bored, a pinkish shadow suddenly emerged from the blue sea: a Chinese white dolphin! We were all astonished to find a dolphin swimming in



relatively offshore water, southeast to Lamma Island. According to our past records, besides an individual swimming around in Sai Kung water, and another one live-stranded in Sam A Chung, this was the sighting record of Chinese white dolphin farthest away to the southeast from its home range - Lantau.

There was something unusual about this dolphin: it bore some prominent marks on its skin, as if it got some sort of skin infection. We really hope it could get well soon, and be united with its companions. We have taken several photos of its specially-shaped dorsal fin for identification. Primarily, we found that it had not been identified before. Hope that we can see it again in the future.

(Photo credit Samuel Hung)

Valentine's Day - A day we met our beloved dolphins



Fin (NL24) who was recorded most frequently in Hong Kong. It was a spotted adult, and it used to keep a distance from our research vessel. But this time it swam near to us with other dolphins! Another was a younger spotted juvenile, who bore a very obvious long scar on its face, so it was

nicknamed "Scarred-face" in Chinese (its number is NL112). Scarred-face was very active on that day and often came near to the back of our boat, and socialized intensively with other dolphins. Maybe it got a sense that it was Valentine's Day!

(Photo credit Samuel Hung)

In the morning of 14 February 2004, we researchers carried out a line-transect boat survey at Northwest Lantau Island. When our boat neared Northeast of Lung Kwu Chau, a pod of Chinese white dolphins of eleven individuals approached us. When they played happily around our boat, we found some old friends, among which



included Square in Hong Kong. It also kept a very old pal very

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Remaining Asian Grey Whales threatened again

The Asian population of grey whales was thought extinct - eradicated from the planet after being hunted by Japanese whalers. But then a small pod of grey whales was rediscovered 30 years ago in remote seas close to Russia's Far East coast.

Protected by conservationists, the number of the Asian grey whale has slowly risen to around 100 today. This population of grey whales has been classified by the IUCN Red List as "Critically Endangered". But now another threat is facing this fragile population.

Near the feeding grounds of the grey whales, there found a massive sources of oil and gas in recent years. All the world's largest oil companies flooded into the region with plans to drill and build oil and gas platforms and pipelines. Conservationists are worried that the feeding grounds would be destroyed by the development plans, and the population will decline to extinction.

This race for natural resources took place at an area just off Russia's Far East coast near the remote Island Sakhalin. Every year when ice breaks in May, the grey whales return here from their winter breeding grounds for foraging. The whales have used this migration route for centuries. The proposed expansion of oil exploitation would involve installing a new production platform at the seaward edge of the feeding ground, and routing four pipelines near and directly through the feeding ground. It is believed that this would disrupt the bottom-feeding grey whales from accessing and using the feeding grounds. Also the whales might be harmed and even killed by collisions with the increased vessel traffic and underwater noises during seismic survey and construction.

Shell is the major enterprise that hopes to make profit from it - to export the natural resources to the growing economies of Asia. It is believed that this will give the company an important foothold in the region. Currently the conservation groups are urging the British government to act to protect the whales in that they only approve loan guarantees to help finance the project only if Shell promises that the pipelines and construction work will not take place in the feeding grounds of grey whales.

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Activities in March

Seminar

Date: 3 April 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street,
Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 2:30 – 3:30 pm (Topic: Issues of Dolphin Captivity)

3:30 - 4:30 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

Member: Free admission

Non-member fee: HK\$20

Dolphin research trip

Date: 13 March (Saturday)

Time period: 2 pm - 6 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Date: 28 March (Sunday)

Time period: 12nm - 4 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin HK\$250

Fee for Dolphin Pal / Dolphin Elderly: HK\$200

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member, fee: HK\$250

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Activity Review

Dolphin Research Trip

Spring is a season for propagation. Our dolphin friends also take this chance to socialize with their peers. The dolphin research trip on 29 February is another unforgettable experience.



As we only managed to have a quick glance at two dolphins while carrying out line-transect survey, we felt a bit disappointed. At that moment, our researchers were so smart to spot splashes from afar. A few dolphins



were found socializing over there. When we got closer, a dolphin approached us after a short while. Beneath the clear waters, there we saw the dolphin from beak to tail. It was swimming right in front of our boat, accelerating with its powerful tail. That was really graceful and fabulous! Another spotted young dolphin even

stopped by the side of our boat and showed us its glossy belly for over 10 seconds. On that day, three very active dolphins had circled our boat, sometimes demonstrating intimate gestures. Researchers inferred that they were at courtship.



All of us followed the dolphins and ran to and fro on the boat. One can hear the non-stop sound of shutters. Almost every one of us was running out of films or memory card capacity. Such close encounter had put us all in exhilaration. It was so difficult to calm down after such an exciting experience!

Please visit our website for more photos of the dolphin trip!

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Dolphin Researcher's Diary

To quite a number of people, dolphin research is a rather enviable career in that researchers can see wild dolphins frequently and their job must be full of fun! However, apart from conducting boat survey to observe wild dolphins, they also have some offensive duties: deal with stranded dolphin carcasses! Every year some ten to twenty cetacean carcasses were found washing ashore, over 90% of which are much decomposed. To gather useful data and collect samples, researchers still have to carry out necropsies on them. Let's take a look at the secret side of the work of a dolphin researcher!

4 March 2004

by Leo

Yesterday our research team received a stranding report from the AFCD. As it was near dusk, we set off early this morning.

It was reported that the dolphin carcass was found on one of the beaches of Tai Tan, Sai Kung, which was rather remote. We got on the patrol boat of Marine Park at the Wong Shek Pier and headed for the site. According to the informant, the carcass was around 3 - 4 feet long and looked yellow. From our experience, we estimated that the carcass would belong to a finless porpoise.

We reached a beach of Tai Tan in five minutes. There the water was so shallow that even small boat might

easily run aground, so it was quite risky for us to land! After searching for sometime, we still couldn't locate the carcass. Suddenly I smelled the stink of animal carcass, and so I called the others to search around. The smell grew stronger when I knelt down, but when I looked down, it was nothing but a dead fish!

We thought we have reached a wrong site, hence we got on boat and went to another beach. On the way, we found the underwater world around there was graceful with a lot of seaweeds and little fishes!

After landing, we asked a number of hikers if they have seen any dead dolphin. They said no, yet they smelled something bad on their way uphill. I was rather certain this time the carcass was just in the vicinity. After we went through a forest, we finally got it. From its appearance and teeth, we could tell it was a carcass of a finless porpoise. However, as it was badly decomposed, what we could only take were its teeth for age analysis. Then the remains were buried on-site by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department staff. [\[Top\]](#)

Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Dolphin Satellite Tracking Trial Underway - but a controversial issue

5 March 2004

One of the world's most endangered dolphins is the unwitting subject of a major scientific and conservation row in New Zealand, as satellite tagging of a number of Hector's dolphins commences this week. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCCS) is concerned about the welfare of the dolphins and the effectiveness of the research.

New Zealand is home to one of the world's smallest and rarest dolphins - the Hector's dolphin. Hector's are very inquisitive, cute and graceful, and found nowhere else in the world. But at 1.4 metres long, they are also very subject to entanglement in fishing nets.

Following the drowning of almost 800 Hector's dolphins in the mid 1980s, the New Zealand Government declared one of their key areas, the Banks Peninsula, a Marine Sanctuary. However, they, and their even more endangered cousin, the Maui dolphin, remain at risk from fishing in other parts of New Zealand's coast.

In an attempt to find out just how much risk the 100-150 remaining Maui dolphins face from trawl fishing net entanglements, the NZ Government is planning to tag some Maui's. But in order to test whether the tagging will be effective in gathering such information, the more numerous Hector's are about to be tagged in a 'test run'.

This is a highly controversial plan. Conservationists agree that it is necessary to obtain more information on the range of these dolphins, so that any connection between this fishery and possible bycatch of these critically

endangered dolphins can be established.

However, WDCS is concerned both about how effective the tagging will be in collecting the information, and about the significant welfare issues that tagging of small animals presents. WDCS considers that other methods, which have been successfully used in the past to collect valuable data on the Hector's and Maui's dolphins, such as aerial and boat surveys, or acoustic surveys, should be the first choice of the New Zealand Government.

Satellite tagging of whales and dolphins is a highly invasive procedure that involves catching the dolphin, taking it out of the water, handling it for at least 30 minutes while a satellite tag is attached and then placing the animal back in the water, with the hope that the dolphin will return to its normal behaviour. The method of attachment that is proposed in this trial is one of the most invasive surgical techniques that a wild dolphin is likely to undergo. The attachment procedure will involve cutting holes in the dorsal fin and inserting bolts through the holes in order that the tag can be attached.

Despite the controversy, the satellite tracking of the Hector's dolphin trial was completed. So far, three Hector's dolphins in Banks Peninsula, including two females and one male, have already been tagged and tracked by a research team of the Department of Conservation for over 24 hours.

It was reported that the dolphins showed little reaction to the attachment of the tags, and swam off to join other dolphins in their pod after release.

Some samples like blood and skin have been taken from the dolphins. The samples are already sent to the Lincoln University for analysis, which help scientists learn more about the dolphins' health and genetics. The tagged dolphins will be tracked over the next three months, after which the two fastenings on each tag will release. It is believed that the results of the satellite tracking work will be available later this year, with the final evaluation of the trial completed next year.

Source:

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society www.wdcs.org and www.scoop.co.nz

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Dolphin Souvenir Updates

HKDCS has recently launched a variety of dolphin souvenirs, including phone decoration, dolphin ornament, wind chime and dolphin bags. You are most welcome to visit our souvenir page at www.hkdcs.org/joinus/e-souvenir to pick your favorite items. The revenue generated from the dolphin souvenirs will be used to finance dolphin research and education projects. No cost will be deducted



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Activities in April

Seminar

Date: 3 April 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 2:30 – 3:30 pm (Topic: Issues of Dolphin Captivity)

3:30 - 4:30 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

Member: Free admission

Non-member fee: HK\$20

Dolphin research trip

Date: 10 April (Saturday)

Time period: 2 pm - 6 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Date: 25 April (Sunday)

Time period: 12nm - 4 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin HK\$250

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Committee member	Sammi Ng	Information gathering and publication
Committee member	Alvin Lee	Fund raising and public awareness

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Activity Review

Chinese white dolphin painting and drawing competition co-organized with Youth Kwun Tong



Champion, First runner-up, Second runner-up and 5 Meritorious Awards. All students from K. 1 to F. 3 could participate in the competition.

Over 2000 entries were received. Participants had all used their creativity and imagination to draw or paint in their own style. Some even revealed the lovely thoughts of children.

The theme of the competition was “The Happy vs the Unhappy Chinese white dolphin”. Participants were required to depict in their drawing how poor dolphins were in face of various human-induced threats, in contrast with the happy dolphins which were being loved and cared for by humans. The objective was to help them understand the importance of dolphin conservation. Participants were classified into the Painting Group, Lower Drawing Group and Upper Drawing Group,

each of which to be granted with the



As all the entries had their own merits and were meticulously drawn, adjudicators had quite a hard time choosing the winners.

The prize presentation ceremony was held on 18 April at the Sau Mau Ping Plaza. We had set up a booth and some exhibition boards at the venue to raise public awareness on the threats being faced by Hong Kong dolphins and the conservation measures being implemented. We also gave a talk to let people understand better the importance of dolphin conservation.

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Latest Status of Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK

Farewell to our dear SL30...



At noon on 18 April 2004, committee members of the HKDCS were busy preparing for the prize presentation ceremony and exhibition of the painting and drawing competition held at Sau Mau Ping Plaza. We then received a call from AFCD that a carcass of Chinese white dolphin was found stranded near Tai O of Lantau by hikers, and so we needed to deal with the stranding case at once.

On arriving the scene about two hours later, researchers found that the carcass was rather fresh. We were stunned after looking at its dorsal fin: It was SL30 that we were familiar with! Its dorsal fin bore two very deep cuts that were believed to be

caused by ship propellers. The cuts were so distinctive that researchers could recognize it by just taking a brief look at its dorsal fin! We all felt upset about its demise.

SL30 is a sexually mature male. He has been recorded in Hong Kong waters by researchers for 12 times. He was first sighted in July 2002 near Fan Lau, south of Lantau Island. His dorsal fin was intact at that time. However, he got two deep cuts on his dorsal fin when he was sighted for the second time. Because of this he was once considered as a new individual, but was later confirmed to be SL30 after checking the photo-ID catalogue. Since then, researchers regularly encountered SL30 in waters south and west of Lantau Island. The last time we saw him was on 14 April 2004 (it was just four days before he was found dead!) At that time SL30 was actively feeding behind a pair-trawler. It was really a shock to us that he passed away a few days later...



For the time being, researchers had no clues about why SL30 left us all of a sudden. Some samples were collected from him, hoping that would help us identify his cause of death.

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Mystery swirls around dolphin deaths - 105 wash on beaches during March in Florida, US 18 April 2004

The suspects: Red tide toxin, a toxin produced by several species of diatom (a type of single-celled alga) which had killed 149 manatees in Southwest Florida from March 5 to April 27, 1996. It continues to plague area waters.

Atlantic bottlenose dolphins were first found washed up to the beaches of Panhandle on March 11. By the end of the month, the carcass count had reached 105. What's strange about the stranding is that the dolphins bore no outward sign of disease or injury. They simply looked as if they were healthy animals, except that they were actually dead.

"Part of the reason brevetoxin was suspected is that the dolphins were all healthy looking," said Alex Costidis, a marine mammal biologist at the state's Marine Mammal Pathobiology Laboratory in St. Petersburg. "They had healthy fat storage; there was a pregnant female, and everything looked great. It was a wide range of healthy-looking animals. Whatever killed them, killed them quickly."

Other evidence pointed to brevetoxin

High concentrations of brevetoxin, which is produced by the red-tide organism *Karenia brevis*, and low levels of domoic acid, produced by the diatom *Pseudo-nitzschia*, were found in the stomachs and blood of some of the dead dolphins. A leading theory is that the dolphins died after eating fish that had accumulated the toxins in their tissues.

But the cause-and-effect relationship is not complete

Water samples taken off Panhandle by scientists during the die-off showed little or no *K. brevis* and *Pseudo-nitzschia*.

So, brevetoxin or domoic acid or both might be the culprits, but scientists don't know how the dolphins were exposed.

A senior research scientist Cynthia Heil said, "My first guess is that it's a big ocean. It could have been an offshore bloom; the *K. brevis* could have been trapped at the bottom; or it might have been a quick event that we missed."

Stomach clues

Another clue could come from the dead dolphins' stomach contents. Early in the die-off, scientists examined the stomachs of eight dead dolphins, five of which were packed with menhaden. Nelio Barros, manager of Mote Marine Laboratory's Stranding Investigations Program said, "Menhaden have been implicated in other mortality events," Barros said. "They're filter-feeding fishes, so they accumulate the toxin. It's the combined effect that does them in."

The menhaden were eaten just a few hours before the dolphins died.

"As we understand the mechanism, the toxins have to be released from the fishes. So what we'd expect is not absolutely fresh consumed prey. It has to be in there long enough for the digestive process to release the toxin."

Inconclusive tests

This is however, no positive proof that brevetoxin-laced menhaden killed the dolphins. In fact, scientists don't know how much brevetoxin constitutes a lethal dose for dolphins.

When red tide toxin kills manatees, the animals show specific symptoms, such as runny blood, lungs congested and heavy with thick, ropy, blood-tinged mucous, and enlarged kidneys and livers. The dead Panhandle dolphins didn't show the same set of symptoms. Tests on dolphin tissue indicate that neither virus nor disease caused the die-off, although more tests are being done.

Two weeks after the dying stopped, investigators have a pair of likely suspects in the Panhandle dolphin case, but till now, the mystery remains unsolved.

Source: Florida Today

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Coming Activities

Seminar

Date: 5 June 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 3:00 – 3:45 pm (**Topic: Impact of dolphin watching activities on dolphins**)

3:45 - 4:30 pm (**Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK**)

In order to increase public awareness on knowledge of dolphins, admission fee for the seminar is now waived!
You are welcomed to bring your friends or relatives with you.

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 16 May (Sunday)

Time Period: 12 noon - 4pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin HK\$250

Fee for Dolphin Pal / Dolphin Elderly: HK\$200

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member, fee: HK\$250

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Join us now ~ to help protect our dolphins!

You can join as a:

- Friend of the dolphin (individual membership)
- Dolphin Pal (student membership)
- Dolphin Buddy (deluxe membership)
- Dolphin Family (family membership)
- Dolphin Elderly (senior citizen membership)
- Corporate Member
- School / NGOs member
- Student intern

Please visit our website for more details of member privileges!

<http://www.hkdcs.org>

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HKDCS e-newsletter (May 2004)

Coming Activities

Seminar

Date: 5 June 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Room 907, Cheung Sha Wan Government Complex, Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan MTR station Exit C1)

Time: 3:00 – 3:45 pm (Topic: Impact of dolphin-watching activities on dolphins)

4:00 - 4:45 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

This seminar is co-organized by the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

In order to increase public awareness on knowledge of dolphins, admission fee for the seminar is now waived! You are welcomed to bring your friends and relatives with you.

We would like to thank the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for lending us the venue!

Dolphin Researcher's Diary

You may well perceive that with dolphin residing in the sea, dolphin researchers necessarily go on a boat survey. That's right, but conducting on-board observation is certainly not the only way for researchers to collect data on dolphins. In fact, sometimes dolphin researchers do carry out land-based survey at some elevated points to observe the animals. Let's see how they actually perform this intriguing work!

By Alvin

Despite the strong sunlight penetrating his sunglasses deep down into his eyes and the irritating sweat running down from his forehead, the young man insisted to keep his eyes wide-open. After a strenuous hike, he was rather exhausted and couldn't help thinking "My sight wouldn't last long!" All in a sudden, a familiar sparkle came across his eyes, and drew his attention back on earth again. No sooner did the sparkle appear than his cry could be heard echoing in the air, "Oh my gosh, I got a SA...and two more SS! There seems to be a mother-and-calf pair too, but I am not so sure, let me see if I can locate it again..." Right, this guy is a dolphin-researcher who is conducting land-based survey and is scanning the sea surface for dolphins.

The above description is a bit exaggerating though, you may have an idea that dolphin researchers have to conduct, in addition to boat survey, land-based dolphin survey on some suitable elevated points. View of these elevated points is generally wide and within known range of the dolphin for easier observation. These sites are usually far from urban area which is rather difficult to access. Sometimes the sites are so remote that the researchers may even need to take a speed boat ride and make an assault landing, which is, as you can imagine, a rather risky activity.

Researchers will collect different data at different observation points. For example, at Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau, researchers will observe behaviours of dolphins within the marine park, as well as the impacts of fishing activities and dolphin watching imposed on dolphins; while at Mong Tung Wan in Lantau, Ha Mei Tsui in Lamma, and Tai A Chau at Soko Islands, finless porpoise becomes the main target for observation. And, on the trail between Sham Wat and Tai O we observe how small (but speedy!) dolphin watching boats operate and their influence on dolphins, as well as the impacts of any proposed construction works near the area.

Quite a number of people do not understand dolphin research and believe what dolphin researchers regularly do is to enjoy the breeze at boat and take a few photos when there is sighting of dolphins. The truth is, no matter the survey is boat-type or land-based, the physical demand for conducting surveys is very high; and we have to hold a lot of seminars and promotional activities which are not necessarily supported by the public, making us more stressful. Thus, dolphin conservation is certainly no easy task and needs public support. Only with your recognition can we continue promote dolphin conservation and do something for both the community and the dolphins.

Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Rehabilitated Dolphin Toro, released back to Charlotte Harbor, Florida

5 May 2004

The low-lying skiff sped through Charlotte Harbor in Florida with such urgency Tuesday morning (4 May) that it cut a long, white, foamy gash across the calm aquamarine water. As the small craft slid to rest in Bull Bay, a small cove sheltered from the Gulf by a series of mangrove-carpeted islands, wetsuit-clad men and a woman moved quickly to unload the perishable cargo: a juvenile dolphin.

Nearly two months earlier, on March 9, boats assembled near the same spot to capture her. A group of more than two dozen veterinarians, biologists and trained volunteers from Mote, which holds permits to monitor and treat marine mammals, netted the dolphin in the shallows of Bull Bay.

The 2-year-old Atlantic bottlenose, later named Toro, had become entangled in nylon fishing line and was in bad shape. The fishing line had cut halfway through her dorsal fin. More seriously, monofilament line had wrapped tightly around her right pectoral fin, slicing through skin, blubber and muscle all the way to the bone.

"She would have perhaps lost the flipper and her life if we didn't provide the treatment we did," said Deborah Fauquier, deputy manager of Mote Marine Laboratory's stranding program.

That treatment included three surgeries to remove dead tissue from the wound. After two months of rehabilitation at Mote's Dolphin and Whale Hospital in Sarasota, the animal's raw wound had healed.

On Tuesday, Mote researchers moved quickly to release the dolphin. The seven men and women lifted Toro from the open-backed boat on a stretcher and lowered her into the chest-deep water. With a flip of the tail, the dolphin disappeared beneath the water.

Toro is the first dolphin Mote has captured and brought to the hospital for treatment. "It's our preference not to bring them in out of the wild," said Randall Wells, director of Mote's center for marine mammal and sea turtle research. "We only did it because the wounds were so severe that it probably would have died."

Mote scientists believe that the dolphin had lingered near boats, enticed by the prospect of an easy meal. This close contact may have led to its entanglement, Wells said. "People that feed dolphins in the wild are essentially dolphin trainers, but they are teaching behaviors that are detrimental to their (dolphins') survival," Wells said.

Later Tuesday morning and early that afternoon Mote staff observed Toro cavorting about Charlotte Harbor with another dolphin, leaping into the air and chasing fish. "She seems to have readapted very well and rather quickly," Wells said.

Mote staff plan to monitor the dolphin, one of about 400 to 500 around Charlotte Harbor, over the next three to four weeks, but for now, "we're very pleased with how

she's doing," Wells said.

Fishing line entanglements are becoming common in Florida's waters. Marine creatures such as dolphins, manatees, whales and sea turtles are victims.

The Florida Marine Research Institute rescued two manatees last week from a marina in Titusville. One of the animals had lost a flipper during an earlier entanglement and was in danger of losing the other. The other animal's flipper had been cut so deeply by fishing line that it was hanging on by a flap of skin; the flipper fell off during its capture. The agency is trying to catch three other animals in that same marina that have also become entangled.

"But that is just the tip of the iceberg for us," Ann Spellman, a marine mammal biologist with the agency, said. "There are probably several dozen more around the state that are entangled, but they aren't reported right away because unless someone sees a mangled flipper they would never know there's a problem. The line is basically invisible. "In Southwest Florida, a handful of dolphins have died in recent years from entanglements, or from ingesting fishing line. Based on anecdotal evidence, entanglements appear to be on the rise, said Wells.

In November, Mote scientists and volunteers removed fishing line from a dolphin calf found near Placida. Another dolphin was spotted near Pine Island wrapped in fishing line, but not seen again. "There have been more of these cases than I can ever recall in the past," said Wells, a dolphin researcher for 34 years.

Agencies including the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission have started an effort to educate the public about the problems of discarded fishing line and are providing fishing line recycling receptacles at tackle shops and boat launches.

Source: Herald Tribune

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20040505/NEWS/405050411/1060>><http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20040505/NEWS/405050411/1060>

More information and photos of Toro are available on the website of Dolphin and Whale Hospital, Mote Marine Laboratory

<http://www.mote.org/~cmanire/39toro.phtml>

Dolphin Souvenir Updates

HKDCS has recently launched some self-designed and handcrafted silver dolphin accessories which are made from silver clay, a new kind of handicraft material. These accessories are meticulously handcrafted, polished, and burned into 99.9% silver under high temperature. Each design is of limited quantity and every product would be accompanied by a serially numbered certificate and a specially designed dolphin gift box. It's ideal as a gift for friends or personal keepsake.

You are most welcome to visit our souvenir page at www.hkdc.org/joinus/e-souvenir to pick your favorite dolphin accessory and other items. The revenue generated from the dolphin souvenirs will be used to finance dolphin research and education projects. No cost will be deducted.

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Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society ~ Committee

Chairman	Samuel Hung	Organization coordination
Vice-chairman	Leo Yeung	Research projects and intern affairs
Vice-chairman	Patty Tse	Secretary, administration and finance
Committee member	Winnie Au	Membership affairs
Committee member	Dickson Wong	Volunteer affairs
Committee member	Sammi Ng	Information gathering and publication
Committee member	Alvin Lee	Fund raising and public awareness programme

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Activity Review

Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme

In June 2004, HKDCS and AFCD jointly launched a brand-new programme called the Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme. The Programme aims at training tertiary students and members of the public to become Dolphin Ambassadors in order to promote AFCD's code-of-conduct in dolphin watching to dolphin watching operators so as to minimize disturbances to the wild dolphins.



[Encouraging Response](#)

The programme was launched by the end of May. Apart from promoting on the HKDCS website, the programme was covered by various newspapers, TV shows and radio programmes. Quite a number of students and members of the public attended our briefing session on 7 June at the lecture theatre of the Space Museum. As we hoped to recruit about 50 trainees each in the group for tertiary students and the public, we were a bit anxious about the response at the beginning. Yet, on the cut-off day, we just found that the number of applicants well exceeded that of our expectation. Applications by fax, email and mail flocked in. The response was so encouraging. It took us and AFCD representatives quite a lot of time and effort to choose the candidates. By the end of the day, some 50 candidates were chosen for each group to start their journey on dolphin conservation.



Our potential Dolphin Ambassadors

People may ask, how were the Ambassadors chosen? To be honest, it was a tough task to accomplish as we have to pick the candidates within two days from the plentiful applications. We do hope that all the chosen ones would treasure such training opportunity. We mainly judge by the background of the applicants as well as their short essay, which revealed to us their attitude and eagerness in the work. Among the tertiary student group, most of the chosen candidates were students of environmental studies or biology. Some even have the relevant voluntary experiences. Candidates of the public group were from all walks of life. They had all shown their enthusiasm in dolphin conservation though their job may not relate to dolphins, or even the environment or any other animals.

The first training day (The public group)

Training program for the public group commenced on 19 June. The first session was held in the morning. Our chairman, Samuel introduced HKDCS and the concept of ecotourism to the trainees. Our researcher, Alvin then talked about the basic information of Chinese white dolphins. The second session was held in the afternoon. Marine Conservation Officer, Janice, and Marine Parks Officer, Ivan, of AFCD talked about the conservation measures implemented by the government. All the trainees gave good responses. They were very attentive in class and raised lots of meaningful questions. They were all environmentally aware and were eager to take part in dolphin conservation. After going through the third session and the written test, they will get on board for field training. We will keep you updated on their progress in the next issue.



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Latest status of our Chinese white dolphins in HK

Western waters of Lantau - Nursery Ground of Chinese white dolphins

It's summer time! Yes, summer is the breeding season for the Chinese white dolphins of Hong Kong. In our recent surveys, we have already spotted quite a number of dolphin calves. In the latest survey carried out in western waters of Lantau, we have spotted 4-5 dolphin calves in one day! In fact, we discovered last year that waters off western Lantau, that is the strip of water from Sham Wat to Fan Lau via Tai O, are hot spots for dolphin calves. We believe that this is an important nursery ground for the dolphins. We even say this is a "kindergarten" for them! Why are these places so popular among dolphins then? It is thought that the shoreline lining western Lantau is still very pristine with a lot of natural bays, thus sustaining a healthy marine ecosystem, which provides an abundance of food and shelter for the dolphins. We hope to collect more data to prove this.



Chinese white dolphin in Eastern water again?

On 20 June, a hiking tour for Tung Ping Chau organized by the HK Discovery set off at the pier of Ma Liu Shui. People on board soon discovered a pink dolphin swimming near the pier! This was rather surprising as there was almost no record of Chinese white dolphin in Tolo Harbour! AFCD staff and researchers were quite worried that this silly dolphin would lose its way and get stranded. So, they went for a helicopter search over Tolo Harbour and Eastern waters, which was arranged by the Government Flying Service, on 22 June (on Tuen Ng Festival). The search commenced right above Shing Mun River, as we were afraid that the dolphin would get its way into it and be frightened by the Dragon Boat Contest! But we couldn't see it there. Then we searched over Tolo Harbour, Northeastern part of Hong Kong, Tung Ping Chau and the inner bays of Sai Kung. At last, we still couldn't locate it. We all hope that this dolphin would be safe and sound and wouldn't run ashore!

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Dolphin Researcher's Diary

Other than carrying out survey on the Chinese white dolphins in Hong Kong, our research team members occasionally participate in dolphin surveys in nearby regions. This time our vice-chairman, Leo, went for a Chinese white dolphin survey in western Taiwan.

By Leo

In-mid June, I went to the western coast of Taiwan to help conduct some surveys on Chinese white dolphin with Dr. John Wang, Ms. Sichu Yang and Jia-wen, who are researcher team members of the Formosacetus Research and Conservation Group. In the past, there were only sporadic records of Chinese white dolphin stranding on the western coast of Taiwan. Until summer in 2002, HKDCS chairman Samuel, as well as John and Sichu, first discovered Chinese white dolphin living there. Thereafter John and Sichu initiated a Chinese white dolphin survey in Taiwan, and Samuel takes part in the study sometimes.



In-mid June, I went to the western coast of Taiwan to help conduct some surveys on Chinese white dolphin with Dr. John Wang, Ms. Sichu Yang and Jia-wen, who are researcher team members of the Formosacetus Research and Conservation Group. In the past, there were only sporadic records of Chinese white dolphin stranding on the western coast of Taiwan. Until summer in 2002, HKDCS chairman Samuel, as well as

John and Sichu, first discovered Chinese white dolphin living there. Thereafter John and Sichu initiated a Chinese white dolphin survey in Taiwan, and Samuel takes part in the study sometimes.

They were really cute. They showed much curiosity toward our research vessel and frequently approached us. But to my dismay, their living environment is horrible: there was no blue sky but choking black smoke with disgusting smell, accompanied by dead fishes floating on the sea. Yes, the development in western Taiwan is so intense that one can see a lot of smoke emitting from incinerators, and a great amount of untreated sewage being discharged into the sea from plastic factories along the coast.



We can say Chinese white dolphins in Hong Kong are facing a lot of threats, but the living condition for their counterparts in Taiwan is far worse. Researchers don't know much about the distribution and abundance of Chinese white dolphins in Taiwan as research projects on them was just at its infancy stage. What's more, with a lot of rapid development along the western coast of Taiwan, natural shorelines are becoming rare. All these threaten the well being and survival of those dolphins.

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Latest News

The Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is now producing a TV programme series on the relationship

between humans and animals. Dolphin is the star of the first programme in the series. The programme will cover HK research and surveys on wild dolphins and the Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme. They even joined Patty, one of our committee members, in her journey to eastern Taiwan to visit different species of wild dolphins. To know more, don't miss the programme at 7 pm, July 6 at ATV, or you can review the programme on the website of RTHK www.rthk.org.hk thereafter.

(The programme is in Cantonese only)

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Coming Activities

Seminar

Date: 7 August 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: to be confirmed

Time: 3:00 – 3:45 pm (Topic: Issues of Do Cetacean strandings and stranding investigation program in HK)

4:00 - 4:45 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

In order to increase public awareness on knowledge of dolphins, admission fee for the seminar is now waived! You are welcomed to bring your friends and relatives with you.

Dolphin research trip

Date: 17 July (Saturday)

Time period: 1:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

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Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society ~ Committee

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Committee member	Alvin Lee	Fund raising and public awareness programme

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Activity Review

Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme

In June 2004, HKDCS and AFCD jointly launched a brand-new programme called the Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme. The Programme aims at training tertiary students and members of the public to become Dolphin Ambassadors in order to promote AFCD's code-of-conduct in dolphin watching to dolphin watching operators so as to minimize disturbances to the wild dolphins.



This month, nearly 100 participants of the programmes have already accomplished two classroom training courses as well as two field trainings, and have passed our assessment. That means, they have now become Dolphin

Ambassadors.

Within August (Dolph

in Conservation Month), each of the ambassadors will have to guide dolphin-watching tours to promote the compliance of code-of-conduct for dolphin watching to the operators and the public, and convey accurate knowledge of dolphins to them. This would enable them to learn more about these amazing creatures and to take solid actions to protect it. Those who have guided 3-4 tours in August will receive a certificate issued jointly by the AFCD and the HKDCS.



Besides, the ambassadors are preparing a questionnaire concerning dolphin watching activities, which will be used to collect data and information from the participants, tour operators and boat captains of dolphin watching tours during the Dolphin Conservation Month. Information to be collected includes the interviewees' awareness and attitude toward dolphin watching activity in the wild. After the data are polled and analyzed by the ambassadors from the tertiary student group, result of the survey will be publicized in the roving exhibition from October through December, in order to deepen public's understanding of the cetaceans and dolphin watching activities in Hong Kong.

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Committee Member's Diary

Taiwan is not very far away from Hong Kong geographically, but the number of cetacean species occurring in Taiwan is unexpectedly much higher! Besides Chinese white dolphin on the west coast, over 20 species of whales and dolphins can be found on the east coast as it faces the immense Pacific Ocean. The vice Chair-Lady of HKDCS, Patty, paid a visit to the east coast of Taiwan in mid-June in search of these graceful creatures.

Dolphin Exploration in Taiwan - 19 June 2004

By Patty

I always wish I could travel around visiting different dolphin friends at sea. As the period from May

to October is the cetacean watching season of Hualien, we went for a dolphin watching trip to the eastern coast of Taiwan. During our dolphin exploration, we met various pods of spotted dolphins, Risso's dolphins and spinner dolphins. They came in large groups and I guess I'd met at least some 200 dolphins in a day!

In search of dolphins in the rough sea

Facing the vast Pacific Ocean, the sea is much rougher in Hualien than in Hong Kong. As a typhoon was passing by in the open sea, waves were as high as two floors as they swashed against the bank. The boat kept on swaying and the horizon was out of sight.

Spotted dolphins, the bow-riders

After over an hour's of hard times in the rolling sea, there we met our dolphin friends at last. Pods of dolphins were leaping in and out of water in synchrony. A streamlined body suddenly appeared in the blue next to our boat. By looking at the pattern on its body and the white tip of the rostrum, I know it's the spotted dolphin coming over to say hello. There were one, two, three ...of them taking turns to bow-ride at our boat. This was exactly what I could only see in dolphin documentaries before this trip!



What a surprise - meeting a ray



While we were all focusing on the spotted dolphins, a "kite" was found floating leisurely next to our boat. That was a ray. According to the dolphin watching guide, it was rare that a ray would swim near the surface next to a boat. It was only the second time that she saw a ray behaving like that.

The well decorated Risso's dolphins

Another pod of dolphins appeared in the afternoon. They were well decorated with interlaced marks. They were round-headed with a short beak. Some were darker and some were lighter. From these, I could tell they were Risso's dolphins. The Risso's also had a rather tall dorsal fin, which made them even easier to



be identified at a distance.



The magnificent spinner dolphins

After a while, we saw something emerging from the sea spinning in high speed and fell into water making a lot of splashes. Undoubtedly, they must be the incredible spinner dolphins which I had longed to meet! Such acrobatics violate the law of physics and it is something that only the spinner dolphins alone could perform. Their motions are so

impressive that even the world champion of high board diving couldn't compare. At that time, we were surrounded by groups of spinner dolphins and we just couldn't tell which way to look. We were busy looking around to watch the classic but magnificent spinner dolphin show.

Why are there so many species of dolphin in Hualien?

The Hualien waters is subject to the influence of the warm North Equatorial Current (also commonly called the Kuroshio Current) which is vibrant with oceanic life. Different species of oceanic dolphins and whales therefore, are attracted by the abundance of food and come to feed in large groups. The whale watchers can then follow this Kuroshio Current to search for dolphins and whales.

Apart from the spotted dolphins, Risso's dolphins and spinner dolphins mentioned above, species that were recorded in the waters include Fraser's dolphins, melon-headed whales, sperm whales, orcas, false killer whales, bottlenose dolphins and pilot whales. Yet, it is more common to find smaller cetaceans there.

As quite a number of cetacean species could be found in Hualien, it'd be better if one could check out the characteristics (e.g. shape of the dorsal fin and head, colour, pattern as well as behavioral pattern) of all the recorded species there so that you can recognize them at a few glances. This would make your dolphin exploration full of fun.

Watching whales and dolphins in the wild is an amazing experience. It is somewhat like magic that one can meet with a dolphin in the vast and far ocean. The most important of all is that we should respect them while visiting their home and keep our minds open. Some of our dolphin friends might have already come over to say hello. This is why meeting dolphins and whales in their natural habitat is something we should treasure.

Dolphin watching information of Hualien

Trip fee: around TW\$ 1,000 (special offer at TW\$800 during the "Visit Taiwan Year", around HK\$190)

Duration: around three hours (including 0.5 hours of briefing and transportation at the beginning)

Transportation: By plane to Taipei (around 1 hour 15 minutes) and by plane at Taipei Sungshan Airport to Hualien (around 40 minutes; ticket fare around TWS\$1100 -1500) or by train at Taipei Train Station to Hualien (around 3 hours; ticket fare around TWS\$455)

Website: www.turumoan.com.tw

Exchange rate: ~ HK\$1 = TW\$ 4.2 (subject to changes)

If you would like to know more about dolphin watching in Hualien, you're most welcomed to contact Patty at patty@hkdc.org.

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Coming Activities

Hong Kong Book Fair

The latest pictorial of Chinese white dolphin (Chinese version only) published by the HKDCS is launched in the Hong Kong Book Fair! Besides dolphin pictures that are publicized for the first time, Samuel, Chairman of HKDCS, will also tell how he lived and felt in the past six years of cetacean research. The pictorial costs HK\$78, and will be sold at a special price of HK\$58 during the Book Fair. The revenue generated from the pictorial will be donated to HKDCS for dolphin research after cost is deducted.



Date: 21-26 July 2004

Venue: Booth 1C16, 18 (Hong Kong Discovery booth) at HK Convention and Exhibition Centre

Time: 21 July (9 am -10 pm)

22-25 July (10am - 10pm)

26 July (10 am - 6 pm)

Seminar

Date: 7 August 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Room 907, Cheung Sha Wan Government Complex, Hong Kong

Time: 3:00 – 3:45 pm (Topic: Issues of Do Cetacean strandings and stranding investigation)

program in HK)

4:00 - 4:45 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

This seminar is co-organized by the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

In order to increase public awareness on knowledge of dolphins, admission fee for the seminar is now waived!

You are welcomed to bring your friends and relatives with you.

We would like to thank the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for lending us the venue!

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Activity Review

Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme

In June 2004, HKDCS and AFCD jointly launched a brand-new programme called the Dolphin Ambassador Training Programme. The Programme aims to train tertiary students and members of the public to become Dolphin Ambassadors in order to promote AFCD's code-of-conduct in dolphin watching to dolphin watching operators so as to minimize disturbances to the wild dolphins.

After June and July, around 100 participants have finally become our dolphin ambassadors. In August, they have to guide several dolphin-watching tours, on which they help search for dolphins and convey accurate knowledge on the Chinese white dolphin to the tourists. The followings are tour operators / organizations who have taken part in dolphin conservation month:

China Travel	Fat Tat Hong
--------------	--------------

HYFCO Travel Agency Ltd.	Alpha Travel Ltd.
Prime Dynasty Travel Ltd.	Sunshine Holiday Travel Ltd.
HK Discovery Ltd.	HK Dolphin Conservation Society
Hong Thai Travel Services Ltd.	



Besides guiding dolphin watching tours, dolphin ambassadors also carry out questionnaire survey about the dolphin watching industry and code-of-conduct among the tourists. There are three kinds of questionnaires for different target interviewees, namely tourists, tour guides and vessel captains. Some other ambassadors conduct survey at the Tung Chung pier and Tai O pier with dolphin watchers to cover a larger

population.

Starting from this year, researchers are becoming more and more concerned about the speed boats around Tai O waters, which carry tourists out to the sea to search for Chinese white dolphins. All these boats set off at the fishing village of Tai O, each of which can carry around 10 people. And the fee is low. Unfortunately, drivers of these boats do not know much about the dolphins and they will speed toward the dolphins once they spotted them. To understand more about the effect of these speed boats to the dolphins, the dolphin ambassadors also interviewed their passengers.



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Dolphin Researcher's Diary

Generally dolphin researchers in Hong Kong conduct field surveys on Chinese white dolphins. However, starting from this year, AFCD further funds one more research project on finless porpoise, enabling us to spend more time on this species. This summer, we carry out our boat surveys in eastern waters of Hong Kong again.

Exploration in Eastern waters - 14-15 July

By Sammi

I just became more and more excited when I was packing my stuff the night before I set off to Sai Kung for the two-day surveys in eastern waters of Hong Kong. Together with a few of my colleagues, I will also spend a night on the research vessel! The last porpoise survey I went was long

time ago - summer in 2002. And, we didn't spot any finless porpoise that time. In fact, finless porpoise is not common even in summer. So this time I didn't expect much, just a wonderful journey!

The next day we set off at the pier at Sai Kung and conducted our survey around the numerous islets in Sai Kung. One of the significant differences between a porpoise survey and a Chinese white dolphin survey is, we can sail in turquoise clear sea and appreciate magnificent landscape around during porpoise survey. I haven't been to Sai Kung for a long time, and this time I found Sai Kung just as beautiful as I've remembered! Plus the clear sky and gentle breeze, I'd rather have the time stopped forever at this moment!



You may envy us much after reading my description, thinking we were having a great cruise journey! Right, but that's not the whole picture. We generally have to work 50% more time, that is around 9-10 consecutive hours a day, on porpoise survey than our usual dolphin survey, as we have to seize the chance to work more on porpoise! Fortunately four members of

our research team were available for work shift.

In the entire day, we followed the transect line in waters near Sai Kung and Ninepins, totaling around 100 km. However, we couldn't see any cetacean. After all, we had a day full of joy. After we had finished our work, it was already sunset. We all enjoyed the great vista of Ninepins near dusk. Then we had our seafood dinner at Po Toi O and swam in Clear Water bay under the starlight! What a great day!

We sailed off early at around 6 am the next morning and went for offshore seas to search for porpoise. The weather was unexpectedly fine and the sea was calm (We later figured out that the calmness was caused by the approaching tropical cyclone, Kompasu). That's why we had a perfect view in the sea that day.



When we were sailing in the endless sea, we suddenly spotted something shimmering on sea surface. "That's again the fish jumping out of water" we all had the same thought. That day we saw a lot of fishes leaping out of water, which could be confused with finless porpoise at the first sight. When we observed longer, "That's really a finless porpoise!!" We instantly stood up - yes, two black

and round things surfaced and, we could even hear their breath, there were two porpoises! We yelled and started to jump all around on the boat and took video of them...We didn't really expect



them, and they appeared! Thank God!

We then continued our survey and there are still quite a number of them, even when we traveled southward to Po Toi. We had several close encounter with them. Well, but they are elusive animals and never breach, so what we saw are only small parts of their heads and backs. That's already encouraging!

I do believe finless porpoise can be listed as one of the most mysterious animals in the world. And, mankind doesn't know much about them, especially those living in the wild. We even have no idea where the range of the stock in western Pacific extends to. We sincerely hope that we can visit them more in the future!

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

U.S. - Trainer turned on by orca at Sea World

28 July 2004

During the "Shamu Adventure" show at Sea World San Antonio in Texas on 26 July, one of the orcas suddenly turned on its trainer. Thousands of Sea World spectators watched in horror for several minutes as the orca, named Ky, kept trying to dive under the water and hit its trainer. At one point, the orca even tried to take a bite out of the trainer.

It was said that the trainer would see the orca coming and he would go under before the orca actually hit him. He tried hard to stay afloat and tried to calm the orca down, according to one of the spectators. Sea World officials tried to calm the situation by playing soothing music, but every watcher remained stunned and shocked. The incident ended when the trainer was able to jump on the orca's back and leap to safety. The Shamu Adventure was then cancelled for the rest of the day. Veterinarians in Sea World believe Ky is near its breeding age, and somehow felt threatened and showed aggressive behaviors.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, WDCS, notes that aggressive behavior displayed by orcas towards humans in the wild was not recorded, but there are several documented cases of captive orcas attacking their pool mates and humans. The two most serious cases resulted in fatalities to the people involved.

Scientific evidence indicates that cetaceans in captivity suffer extreme mental and physical stress,

which is revealed in aggression between themselves and towards humans, boredom, and a lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality than in the wild.

Source: WDCS, CTV.ca

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[“Friendly” Orca thrashes boats](#)

Coming Activities

Chinese white dolphin carnival

Date: 26 September 2004 (Sunday)

Venue: Discovery Park, Tsuen Wan

Time: 2:00-6:00 pm

Chinese white dolphin carnival is co-organized by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS). It is one of the events held as part of the Dolphin Conservation Programme, which is to endorse the code-of-conduct for dolphin watching. In the carnival, qualified ambassadors will be granted a certificate. There will also be puppet show, computer games, game booths and dolphin exhibitions. We do hope the public will get to know more about the Chinese white dolphin in such joyous atmosphere, and understand the importance of conserving them.



Seminar

Date: 2 October 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 3:00 – 3:45 pm (Topic: Importance of Marine Park to dolphin conservation in HK)

4:00 - 4:45 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

This seminar is co-organized by the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. In order to increase public awareness on the dolphins, admission fee for the seminar is now waived! You are welcomed to bring your friends and relatives with you.

We would like to thank Hong Kong Travel and Tourism Training Centre for lending us a room as the seminar venue!

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 16 October 2004 (Saturday)

Time Period: 1:30 - 5:00 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

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Activity Review

Reef Check 2004

This year is the first time that HKDCS participated in the Reef Check, which was carried out on 12 Sept (Sunday). Other than

cetaceans, HKDCS is also concerned about HK's marine environment. That's why we took part in this annual event to conserve our marine ecosystem.

In collaboration with the Reef Check Foundation, AFCD coordinates the Reef Check activity. This event can help raise public awareness on the value of coral reefs, as well as the threats facing them and the related conservation issues. Data collected by the research teams will be used by AFCD and other green groups for implementing effective measure in corals conservation.

This year the survey site assigned to the HKDCS is Tai She Wan of Sai Kung. Scuba divers first laid a 100-m transect line on coral reef in a designated region. They then followed the transect line to record fishes, invertebrates and corals on their way. Substratum of the sea floor along the way and any abnormal condition (e.g. coral bleaching and reef destruction by anchor) were documented too.



As a number of our committee members are not qualified Scuba divers, HKDCS started to recruit eligible open-water divers for help two months ago. We were so pleased that quite a lot of our members, dolphin ambassadors and other friends were enthusiastic to give a helping hand. And some non-divers came as to give us support and enjoy a leisurely trip! Finally there were around 30 participants joining and our trip was filled with happiness.



Besides Tai She Wan, we have also conducted Reef Check survey at another site in the afternoon: Bluff Island. As we observed, coral cover in Bluff Island seems higher than that of Tai She Wan; and the coral communities at Bluff Island are more diverse apparently. And, as Bluff Island is more celebrated tourist spot, it may risk damage

from more human activities.

After the data collected from Reef Check are coordinated and analyzed, the results will then be sent to AFCD.

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

“Friendly” Orca thrashes boats

A juvenile male orca (killer whale), nicknamed Luna, has made frequent contact with people and boats in waters off Vancouver Island, since he began frequenting the waters around Vancouver Island, British Columbia almost three years ago.

As a member of the Southern resident community of orcas, Luna's presence in the area is noteworthy since he has been separated from his natal pod for three years, during which he has lived in solitary but has increased contact - and sometimes conflict - with humans in the area. Seeking companionship and interaction, Luna has 'played' with boats, overturning a few and nipping off the fish-finders on others. Such behaviour has raised the ire and concern of people, and Luna's presence is unfortunately now considered not only as a 'nuisance' by some, but also a danger to the humans that seek to interact with Luna, or merely travel through shared waters. Luna himself risks injury from human through intentional or unintentional contact.

In the past, human had caused the problem by coming down to the dock to see Luna, who used to snoop around docks and boat propellers. One of them even tried to brush Luna's teeth. The problem would not have been so serious if human had kept a distance from Luna.

Although healthy and able to feed on his own, orca experts and management authorities conclude that it is in Luna's best interest to bring him back to his pod. After several years of public education, restricting the increasingly dangerous interactions with the orca, as well as in consideration of the 'genetic' value of Luna to the dwindling and threatened Southern Resident orca community, the management had come up with such a decision. Furthermore, the previous successful reintroduction of Springer (another

solitary orca reunited with her northern resident family in July 2002) has provided a favourable motivation in this escalating saga.

All orcas in the Southern Resident population have been identified and tracked for the last decade. Based on this identification system, Luna is also known as L98, indicating his specific birth position and matrilineal line within the pod. Luna's mother is still living, and the chances for a successful relocation and integration into his pod are very high.

Source: WDCCS

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Roving Exhibition & Whale and Dolphin Photo Exhibition
Chinese White Dolphin Carnival
Commercial trade of Irrawaddy dolphin banned

HKDCS e-newsletter (October 2004)

Coming Activities

Promoting the Code-of-conduct in Dolphin Watching - Roving Exhibition

The Dolphin Conservation Roving Exhibition, to be held from October through November, is the last section of the code-of-conduct in dolphin watching promotional activities. The exhibition covers knowledge of Chinese white dolphin and finless porpoise, as well as the code-of-conduct in dolphin watching.



Moreover, results of the survey on dolphin watching conducted by Dolphin Ambassadors in August are publicized for the first time.

The roving exhibition was launched at the Chinese white dolphin Carnival on 26 Sept. The exhibition will be shown at the following locations and periods:

7 - 20 October

Kingswood Ginza, Tin Shui Wai

21 October to 3 November

The Metropolis Mall, Hung Hom

4 - 17 November

City One Plaza, Shatin

Whale and Dolphin Photo Exhibition (Maritime Square)

Date: 1-9 November 2004

Venue: Cape of Good Hope, Level 3, Maritime Square, Tsing Yi



To let the public appreciate the beauty of cetaceans, HKDCS will hold a cetacean photo exhibition at Maritime Square in November. Besides precious photos of the Chinese white dolphins provided by HKDCS chairman, Mr. Samuel Hung, photos taken by our honorary advisor, Mr. Steven Wong and his wife, Ms. Takako Uno will also be shown. Their photos are taken from different places around the world, covering a variety of cetacean species, including the humpback whale, beluga, sperm whale, spinner dolphin and striped dolphin, etc. For more details about the exhibition, please visit our website later.

Activity Review

Chinese white dolphin Carnival

The Chinese white dolphin carnival, which was co-organized by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society (HKDCS), ended with great success. The carnival is one of the key parts of the code-of-conduct in dolphin watching promotional activities. At the carnival, qualified dolphin ambassadors were presented with certificates. Exhibition panels and game booths were also set up at the venue for members of the public to have an enjoyable afternoon.



The carnival was held on 26 Sept from 2 to 6 pm at Discovery Park of Tsuen Wan. Before the game booths started to operate, AFCD and HKDCS awarded certificates to those ambassadors who had completed the training sessions and provided dolphin watching guiding service to the tour operators during the Dolphin Conservation Month. The Director of AFCD, Mr. Thomas Chan, the Chairman of the Country and Marine Parks Board, Professor Kwai-cheong Chau and our Honorary Advisor, Professor Paul Lam, were invited to be our Guests of Honor.



The carnival commenced when some 100 dolphin balloons rose from the stage! The game booths were the most popular part of the carnival and queues were rather long in the whole afternoon! With a certain amount of scores, participants can get a variety of souvenirs. Of those, dolphin balloons were best-liked by kids - these are the dream souvenirs for them!



The carnival ended at 6 pm. It was estimated that around 3,000 people had attended the carnival. We all felt very excited as this is much higher than we had expected!

Brief result of the survey on dolphin watching activity

In the period from August through mid-September, dolphin ambassadors helped guide 22 dolphin watching tours, in which they had successfully conducted questionnaires with 162 dolphin watchers, 15 tour guides and 13 boat captains. Some other ambassadors carried out surveys at Tung Chung Pier, Tai O pier and Tai O market on holidays, and interviewed 122 dolphin watchers.

The survey reveals that members of the public do have some basic knowledge about Chinese white dolphin, but they still have some misconceptions. For instance, 93% of respondents do not know the scientific name of Chinese white dolphin, while 64% believe Chinese white dolphin is an endangered species, which is not the real case.

Besides, over half of the interviewed dolphin watchers have never heard of the code-of-conduct in dolphin watching, while tour guides and boat captains in general are more aware of the code. This indicates that more promotion on the code-of-conduct would be needed to reduce the disturbances caused by dolphin watching boats to the wild dolphins.

Detailed result of the survey is publicized on the exhibition panels of the roving exhibition.

[Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world](#)

Commercial trade of Irrawaddy dolphin banned

14 October 2004

On the final day of its 2004 meeting in Thailand, CITES, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, has ratified decisions to enlist the Irrawaddy dolphin from CITES Appendix II (which permits regulated international commercial trade) to Appendix I (prohibits trade for primarily commercial purposes).



Irrawaddy dolphin is a freshwater species native to Southeast Asia and northern Australia. Small and fragmented populations of Irrawaddy dolphins in SE Asia are already threatened by accidental killing in fishing nets and habitat destruction. Experts, including the International Whaling Commission, fear that catching

a few individuals could drive some critically endangered populations to extinction.

The species meets the trade criteria for an Appendix I listing under CITES because of the potential for an increase in demand for live specimens. Just nine Asian countries already represent over 35% of the international market for live captive dolphins, with over 80 dolphinariums already in existence in the region and at least 13 more planned. Irrawaddy dolphins have not bred successfully in captivity and demand is expected to increase to stock and restock Asian facilities. Thailand fears that the recent explosion of demand in Asia for captive dolphins will provide an incentive for more people to capture wild Irrawaddy dolphins.

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) believes that CITES has taken a responsible and laudable decision. A full ban on international trade is essential to protect these critically endangered animals from the demands of the captivity industry.

Source: WDCS

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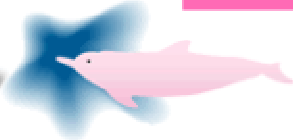
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Society webpage update

Biopsy Project

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Tesco ends whale meat sale in Japan

Latest News

HKDCS will celebrate her first birthday this December! To celebrate it, the website of HKDCS has already been updated! This also facilitates easier browsing of our website and gives you a breath of fresh air! The English version of the website will soon be available!

Go to our latest website and check it out! www.hkdcs.org

Our latest research project

Research on Chinese White Dolphin - Biopsy Project

This project, funded by HKDCS, aims at providing more in-depth information about our dolphin friends in Hong Kong. Since late October, our research team has started to collect biopsy samples on regular dolphin surveys. It is anticipated that the sample collecting task will be accomplished by late November.

What is Biopsy? What information can it offer us?

From the years' of studies on the Chinese White Dolphin, researchers have gathered a pool of valuable information on this species. However, their population structure and several aspects of their biology still remain unknown. With this project, we hope to unveil these mysteries, including age structure, sex, colour pattern development, contaminant level inside their

body and life history by conducting DNA and eco-toxicology analysis.



How is Biopsy carried out?

Biopsy samples are taken from the dolphins. Like the biopsy projects carried out in other places, a small piece of skin and blubber sample is taken using specially designed dart and crossbow. This is a safe method as the chance of infection and harm on the dolphins can be minimized. Whenever we meet dolphins that we can recognize, we will try to take samples. This tiny core of skin and blubber sample of about 1.5 – 2cm can unveil lots of mysteries about the dolphins, which contributes to conservation work to an extent far beyond our imagination.

Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip cum 1st Anniversary Celebration

Date: 12 December (Sunday)

Time Period: 10 am - 4 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

To celebrate HKDCS's 1st anniversary on 12 December, a research trip will be arranged with special itinerary, which includes Lung Kwu Chau exploration with land-based research briefing, etc. with lunch served. As places are limited, reservation will be on first-come-first-served basis. Please reserve early with Winnie at winnie@hkdc.org and join us to celebrate the 1st anniversary of HKDCS.

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once); Dolphin Buddy who had already joined the research trip can join this special trip at HK\$100. Fee for Friend of the Dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150 per head

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

Seminar

Date: 4 December 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 2:30 – 3:30 pm (Topic: Issues of Dolphin Captivity)

Free admission! You are most welcomed to bring your friends and relatives with you!

We would like to thank Hong Kong Travel and Tourism Training Centre for lending us a room as the seminar venue!

Activity Review

Whale and Dolphin Photo Exhibition (Maritime Square)

The nine-day cetacean photo exhibition held by HKDCS at Maritime Square ended on 9 Nov with great success. The beauty of Chinese white dolphins, humpback whale, orca, sperm whale, beluga, spinner dolphin, Risso's dolphin, spotted dolphin, etc., has attracted over 7,000 visitors. This number is really beyond our expectation! We now know these stunning marine creatures have attracted much public care and concern!



Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Tesco ends whale meat sale in Japan

9 November 2004

Tesco PLC has announced that it has decided to stop selling all cetacean (whale, dolphin and porpoise) products in its Japanese supermarkets, following a joint campaign by Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Greenpeace. They called upon the UK's leading retailer to immediately withdraw all whale meat products that were being sold in at least 45 of their supermarkets stores in the Tokyo area.

Tesco was made aware that the Japanese government sanctions the killing of more than 800 whales in the North Pacific and Antarctic, under the guise of 'scientific research', an act which is in direct contravention of the expressed will of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and its ban on commercial whaling. More than 20,000 small whales, dolphins and porpoises are also killed in Japan's coastal waters. A significant percentage of cetacean products on sale in Japan have been shown to be highly polluted, posing a potential health threat to consumers.

Japanese consumers are becoming more aware of the problem, and that falling prices and growing stockpiles of whale meat indicates a significant decrease in domestic demand for the products.

Japan's so-called 'scientific' whaling fleet will set sail for the Antarctic in November to hunt the protected minke whales in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary. Tesco's decision will help to reduce the market demand for these products within Japan, ultimately building pressure on Japan to abide by the worldwide ban on commercial whaling. WDCS believes Tesco's decision is a clear indication that this hunt is unnecessary and that decreasing demand for whale products in the Japanese market makes a mockery of Japan's ongoing commercial whaling.

Source: WDCS

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Northwest Lantau Exploration

Dolphin Research Trip cum 1st Anniversary Celebration

Researcher's Diary

Japan has been reported of slaughtering dolphins again

Coming Activities

Northwest Lantau Exploration - observing the home of Chinese white dolphin from land

Date: 30 January 2005 (Sunday)

Gathering Time: 8:45 am

Gathering point: Tung Chung MTR Station Exit B

Itinerary: from Tung Chung to Tai O, Lantau Island

Duration: ~ 6 hours

Fee: Free, please prepare transport fee for return trip from Tai O



In this tour, dolphin researchers will bring participants to one of their land-based survey sites - Sham Wat, to let them experience how dolphin research is conducted. It is also a great opportunity to appreciate the pristine coastline and vista on northwest Lantau before the construction of the Hongkong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge. From there, you can view the natural habitat of Chinese white dolphins from a different angle. With limited quota, please register early by contacting our committee member Winnie at winnie@hkdc.org.

Note: In view of the lengthy route, please assess your own ability to see if you can walk the whole distance before registration.
Insurance not included. Participants may purchase insurance on their own if consider necessary.

Activity Review

Dolphin Research Trip cum 1st Anniversary Celebration
HKDCS celebrated her first anniversary on 12 December by holding a research trip for members. Our members gave us very encouraging response and we had as many as 56 people on board that day!

To celebrate this special day, the itinerary of this research trip was equally special. We offered catering and what's more, a birthday cake, for the celebration! Our vice-chairman, Leo, also took participants up to the land-based survey site on Lung Kwu Chau, to let them learn more about dolphin researchers' work.

On that day, apart from seeing dolphins frolicking in the sea, we encountered a dolphin carcass being washed ashore on Lung Kwu Chau. While waiting for AFCD personnel, researcher gave a brief introduction on how stranded dolphins were handled to let participants learn about dolphin research from a different angle.





Researcher's Diary

Our new committee member, Choyce, took part in a land-based survey of cetaceans in Matzu Islands, Taiwan, in collaboration with the FormosaCetus Research and Conservation Group this November.

By Choyce

Matzu, a place recalling military activities to many people's mind, seems to have nothing to do with whales and dolphins. Matzu is part of Taiwan, which is actually nearer to Fuzhou Province of Mainland China. It is located at Northwest side of Taiwan Strait and is made up of more than ten islets. Matzu's military development has been hindering people from understanding her, especially in the ecological aspect.

The present project was collaborated by HKDCS and a Taiwanese cetacean research group, the FormosaCetus Research and Conservation Group, with the support of the Matzu local government. It aimed at getting some basic information on cetacean distribution and composition around the islands by

carrying both land-based and boat survey.

After an hour's domestic flight from Taipei, we could feel the chilling wind from all directions once we stepped out of the plane. One might not know that Matzu is the coldest region in Taiwan, where air temperature drops to as low as 0 °C in winter. At the time we arrived (mid November), it was only 12-13 °C.

As our research team had not conducted land-based survey on Matzu, we started to search for suitable land-based sites by traveling around the islands by motorbike. We also talked to some local fishermen, who provided us much valuable information on local dolphins.



After a series of preparatory works, our land-base survey finally started on the forth day. Our team was split up into three groups to conduct observation at several sites simultaneously. One of our team members saw “something” in 15 minutes after getting started. A little black head appeared in the middle of an inner bay – it was a finless porpoise! But it was so shy that it vanished after a second. In the afternoon, we were even more surprised to find groups of “head”. This time I could finally spot a lovely finless porpoise! Sightings of

finless porpoise were made constantly on the following days, so you can imagine how many little animals there are around Matzu waters.

However, we are also confident to tell that these cute porpoises are actually facing many threats. On the second day of our arrival, we received a call from a government officer, who told us that a fisherman was now at his doorstep, with a finless porpoise on his hands, which was by-caught! We hurried there and saw a seemingly living, grey porpoise which was less than 1.5 m long, with blood coming out from its “smiling” mouth. The fisherman told us that dolphins sometimes accidentally came into his fishing net for food, but could not find their way out. He would try his best to help free them, but there was nothing he could do if the animals were too big. We believed that, apart from finless porpoise, there should be other species of dolphins and even whales around the islands, because the fisherman told that in the past, his by-catch included some animals that bore “long noses”, and sometimes the animals were three to four metres long.



There is still a long way to work on conservation of cetaceans in Taiwan. But we really appreciate that the local fisherman of Matzu are really helpful and are willing to co-operate with researchers, especially in the case of by-catch, which really motivates us to carry on with our work.

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Japan has been reported of slaughtering dolphins again

In November 2004, fishermen in Futo, Japan, slaughtered dolphins again - they have driven a pod of about 100 bottlenose dolphins into Futo harbor, and the harbor was then sealed with a net so that the dolphins couldn't escape. Divers from two Japanese aquaria arrived Futo to select between 20 and 30 “show-quality” dolphins for their facilities, while some of the remaining individuals were chopped for “scientific research”. An international conservation group, Sea Shepherd, recorded the slaughtering process and uploaded the video clip to their website. Because of the brutality, plentiful conservation groups and parties were enraged by what Japan has done.

Video clip of dolphin slaughter can be downloaded from the following link:

http://www.seashepherd.org/taiji/taiji_video.html

Sea Shepherd has held their worldwide protest against Japanese killing of dolphins on 19 November 2004, details can be seen in the link below:

<http://www.seashepherd.org/events/protest041119.html>

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HKDCS Latest News

HKDCS Newsletter (Winter 2004) Released

HKDCS has already sent out the 2nd volume of the half-yearly newsletter (Winter 2004) to all members in early January. If you haven't received it yet, please give us a call at 2866-2652. The coloured version can be downloaded from HKDCS website.

New dolphin souvenirs

In 2005, HKDCS has released some new dolphin souvenirs, including newly-designed badges, pendants and bracelets. Check them out at our website NOW!

http://www.hkdcs.org/Souvenir/sou_en.htm

Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 6 March 2005 (Sunday)

**Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung
MTR Station**



Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: Free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

Activity Review

Promoting the Code-of-conduct for Dolphin Watching - Roving Exhibition

HKDCS assisted AFCD in arranging a roving exhibition on promoting the code-of-conduct for dolphin watching at Olympic MTR Station (14 - 16 Jan) and Tung Chung MTR Station (17 - 20 Jan). Besides the biology and ecology of Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises, the exhibition covered details of the code-of-conduct for dolphin watching activity, with an aim to make more people aware of how they can watch wild dolphins in a responsible manner. Dolphin ambassadors will be present at the venue during some periods to interpret the exhibits to interested passers-by. HKDCS would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participating ambassadors for their generous help!



Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Dolphins got trapped by tsunami

Whilst the awful human tragedy resulting from the recent tsunami is still becoming clear, it is apparent that some coastal wildlife has also been affected. In particular, it appears that the giant waves caused a mother dolphin and her calf to become stranded in a small lagoon in Thailand. They are believed to be Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and were spotted by a man searching for his missing wife.



This 10 year-old humpback dolphin, which had been trapped in an old mining lake in Takua Pa district for 11 days, was returned to the Andaman Sea on 5 Jan 2005 by a rescue team of almost 100 local fishermen, marine biologists and foreign dolphin experts after three rescue attempts - a rare story of survival of 11 days after the massive disaster. But the fate of the smaller dolphin also spotted in the murky, stagnating water was unclear.



The rescue operation started early in the morning when eight divers from the navy and the Phuket Marine Biological Centre cleared debris from the bottom of the lake so that fishing nets could be laid. In the afternoon, local fishermen led by kamnan Tawee Paeyai used two large nets to guide the dolphin towards a corner of the lake where it was captured in another net. About 20 soldiers and local fishermen then lifted the two-metered dolphin of 60kg up to prevent it from diving back into the water. The dolphin was laid on a military stretcher, put on a pick-up truck and quickly driven to the beachfront, about 500 metres from the lake.

On the pick-up truck, veterinarians let the dolphin drink seawater from a bottle and injected it with antibiotics as it had suffered minor bruising. After arriving at the beach, up to 20 rescuers carried the stretcher to the sea. The dolphin was released and it swam off vigorously, ending the three-day rescue

operation.

Cooperation between local fishermen, who were keen on using large fishing nets, marine biologists and wildlife rescuers was the key to success. Foreign dolphin experts and marine biologists had been worried that the local fishermen's capture method might harm the dolphin as they thought it would become entangled in the net. Thai marine biologists, however, continued to work closely with the fishermen to ensure the dolphin was not hurt by the net.

“We are glad that the dolphin is safe. We will now inspect nearby lakes to ensure no other marine animals are trapped inland,” said Mr. Wannakiat, director of the Phuket Marine Biological Centre.

Photo Credit: MSNBC News, Anchorage Daily News

Copyright by Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society



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Dolphin Research Trip

Activity Review

Plight of Japanese orcas further menaced

Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip



Date: 6 March 2005 (Sunday)

Gathering Time: 9:15 am (Please be punctual)

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dismiss Time: 12:30 - 1:00 pm

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: Free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

* In the case of unfavourable weather conditions, participants will be notified one day before of cancellation of the trip.

Activity Review

Observing Chinese white dolphins from land ~ by participants

30 Jan 2005, foggy and rainy. Although the weather didn't look fine, I still hoped for the best.

This time, we went for a hiking trip to observe Chinese white dolphins from land. Our team of 13 persons took off from Shu Lo Wan of Lantau Island and walked along the coast to Tai O. What made us worry most were the rainy weather and the possibility of not seeing the dolphins. Fortunately, it only drizzled. Though we didn't manage to see any dolphin or the scenery beyond the thick fog blown from the sea, we did have an enjoyable trip and had the chance to appreciate the beauty of nature along the path. If we could have a chance to walk along that route again, I hope it will be a sunny day, so that we can have different experiences.



Cynthia



This was the first time I joined HKDCS activities and it was such an amazing experience. Although we couldn't see the beautiful Chinese white dolphins in the mist and rain, I could have the opportunity to see the mysterious foggy scenes and the lovely plants around us. We felt nourished with peace of mind.

Ellie

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Plight of Japanese orcas further menaced - 11 orcas die in pack ice

9 February 2005

Eleven orcas (killer whales) died tragically off the northern coast of Japan on the 8th February, near the Russian border, further threatening the survival of the species in this part of the world.

The animals were trapped and crushed in pack ice that pushed them to shore and prevented their escape to the open sea. This loss of almost an entire pod has serious conservation implications. Due to overhunting – both for meat and captivity – few orcas are left in Japanese waters.

The pod of orcas was caught by drifting ice near the Aidomari fishing port, at the northern tip of the Shiretoko Peninsula on the island of Hokkaido, on the morning of 7 February. They were seen floating helplessly on the surface, covered with injuries from the ice. By 8pm that evening only two were still alive. Eleven were dead by the following morning, while a twelfth escaped.

Erich Hoyt, Co-Director of the WDCS-funded Far East Russia Orca Project said, "It is unusual for orcas to become trapped by ice in this way, as they are fast swimmers, and this represents a huge blow to orca conservation in this area."

Local fishermen tried to pull the orcas' bodies out of the ice, and managed to remove two. Local officials plan to recover the rest of the bodies. They have received requests from researchers and museums for skeletons and other specimens, and from an aquarium for sperm from the single male - to carry out artificial insemination of a captive female orca.

Scientists hope to establish whether the orcas were from Japanese or Russian waters. It is hoped that the information collected from the orcas, including genetic samples and photographs, will help experts identify the pod's composition and origin. Erich Hoyt said, "The size of the pod is one clue that they may have been fish-eating resident-type orcas (Another type is mammal-eating transient-type) which are the most productive and would help provide the foundation for recovery of the species in this area."

Source: WDCS

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Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society

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Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip - rescheduled

Due to unfavourable weather conditions, the research trip supposed to be held on 6th this month was postponed to early April, with details as follow:

Date: 3 April 2005 (Sunday)

Gathering Time: 9:15 am (Please be punctual)

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dismiss Time: 12:30 - 1:00 pm

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: Free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

Promoting the Code-of-conduct for Dolphin Watching - Roving Exhibition
HKDCS assisted AFCD in arranging a roving exhibition to promote the code-of-conduct for dolphin watching by the end of March (21st - 28th) at MongKok KCR Station. This exhibition is all about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises, as well as the code-of-conduct for dolphin watching activity, with an aim to arouse public awareness of how to watch dolphins in

the wild responsibly. Dolphin ambassadors will be present at the venue during some periods to interpret the exhibits to interested passers-by. HKDCS would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participating ambassadors for their generous help!

Local News on Cetaceans Conservation

Construction of Container Terminal at Northeast Lantau raises Green Groups' concern

According to the 2005 Policy Address, the construction of Container Terminal 10 (CT 10) is being considered, in which Northwest Lantau and Southwest Tsing Yi are among the proposed sites. This project will come along with extensive reclamation, and the Government has reserved 60-hectares of landmass for backup of container storage.

This issue has raised the concern of local Green Groups, which worry that the extensive development would destroy Lantau's natural environment. The proposed terminal was only 500 metres away from Tai O, the natural landscape of which will undoubtedly be spoiled. Furthermore, it is believed that Chinese white dolphins, which are residents of waters off West Lantau, would be adversely affected by the development projects.

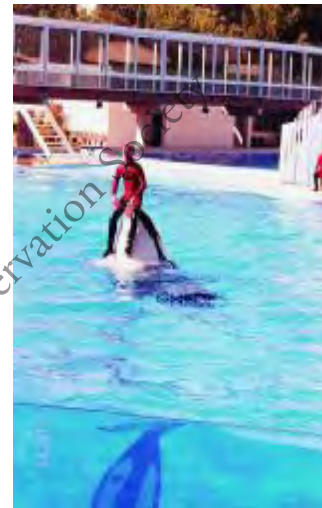
However, the corresponding Government departments expressed that the above policy project hasn't been finalized. They claimed the development plans on Lantau Island will strike a balance between the needs for conservation and economic development. If the construction of CT 10 is to be located on Lantau, the plan will be open to public consultation and environmental impact assessment will also be conducted to learn ways to mitigate negative impacts to the environment.

Ocean Park Hong Kong intends to introduce orcas, belugas and humpback dolphins (Chinese white dolphins)

18 March

The Ocean Park Hong Kong announced its redevelopment plan on 18 March, which aims to raise its competitiveness. It is planned that the reconstruction would commence in 2006 and get completed in 2010. The entire plan would cost around HK\$5.5 billion. One of Ocean Park's proposals is to introduce 33 new species of animals into its theme park, three of which belong to the Order Cetacea, including orca (also known as killer whale), beluga and humpback dolphin (Chinese white dolphin). Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society is concerned about this plan.

In recent years, orcas living worldwide have been facing a number of survival threats, causing their wild populations to decline. The Red List of threatened species of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) has categorized orcas as "Conservation Dependent". We are worried that should orcas be introduced into the Ocean Park, wild populations of orcas would be further menaced. Also, orcas are of very high selling price - US\$ 1 million each. If demand for orcas increases, it is for certain that more people would be attracted to hunt for orcas in the wild. Orcas' huge body size, appetite and living space make it difficult to rear them in captivity. Thus, captive orcas usually die younger than their wild counterparts.



Belugas are cetaceans living in Polar regions. Their conservation status is gaining more attention in recently years. The IUCN Red List of threatened species has categorized belugas as "vulnerable". Besides, belugas live exclusively in cold waters. If they are to live in sub-tropical regions like Hong Kong, a large amount of resources have to be allocated to provide a cold environment to them, and they might not be able to adapt to it.

Besides, Ocean Park intends to introduce humpback dolphin into their park, which is the Chinese white dolphin that is known to Hong Kong people. We

believe that Ocean Park might plan to import Chinese white dolphins from Thailand. Different from orcas and belugas, Chinese white dolphins have been listed in Appendix I of the “Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora” (CITES), which means trade of Chinese white dolphin for primarily commercial purposes have already been banned globally. Up till now, captive Chinese white dolphins are only kept in an aquarium in Singapore, which were wild-caught in Thai waters. Currently Chinese white dolphins are still relatively poorly-studied in science, and any irresponsible catch might impair the survival of their wild populations.

We believe that aquarium would not be the only place for the public to learn and appreciate marine organisms. The best learning ground to know more about wild animals should be their natural habitats. As eco-tourism has been flourishing in Hong Kong, the public shall learn more about wild animals in nature if they attend responsible eco-tours.

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Coming activities – Seminar
Japan to expand whaling quota

Coming Activities

Seminar

Last year, HKDCS funded a biopsy sampling trial programme of Chinese white dolphin in Hong Kong, which was conducted by Dr. T. A. Jefferson, a cetacean expert from the United States. To offer an opportunity for the public to gain a deeper understanding of the biopsy programme, HKDCS, together with the Department of Biology and Chemistry of the City University of Hong Kong, will hold a special seminar about the project, with Dr. Jefferson, as a speaker, presenting the results of the biopsy sample analysis and explaining the biopsy programme in details.



Date: 21 May 2005 (Saturday)

Time: 4:30 - 5:30 pm

Venue: The City University of Hong Kong (exact venue to be announced soon)

Speaker: Dr. T. A. Jefferson

*The talk is mediated in English

Those who are interested please contact our committee member Winnie:

E-mail: winnie@hkdc.org

Tel: 2866-2652

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Japan to expand whaling quota

14 April 2005

It is reported that Japan will expand its already controversial whaling programme in Antarctica this year; nearly doubling its hunt of minke whales, and adding humpback and fin whales to the species targeted.

Japan's plan will be submitted to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) for discussion in June in Korea, although it does not need approval from the Commission to proceed with the expanded hunt.

Japan currently kills about 440 minke whales each year in its Antarctic Scientific Whaling Programme, and another 160 minkes in the North Pacific along with 50 Bryde's, 100 sei and 10 sperm whales. Although the IWC banned commercial whaling in 1986, the killing of whales for scientific research is permitted, and Japan's whaling operations exploit this loophole for commercial gain.

Japan began its scientific whaling operations in 1987 and has killed over 7,600 whales since then. During that time, the IWC has adopted over 20 resolutions calling on Japan to stop, and describing its scientific programmes as "an act contrary to the spirit of the moratorium on commercial whaling and to the will of the Commission."

This latest plan from Japan will face intense criticism from anti-whaling countries and groups like WDCS, who maintain that these operations in

defiance of the moratorium are commercial and should cease.

Source: WDCS

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Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society ~ Committee

Chairman	Samuel Hung	Organization coordination
Vice-chairman	Leo Yeung	Research projects and intern affairs
Vice-chairman	Patty Tse	Secretary, administration and finance
Committee member	Winnie Au	Membership affairs
Committee member	Dickson Wong	Volunteer affairs
Committee member	Sammi Ng	Information gathering and publication

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Activity Review

[Our first Seminar](#)



HKDCS held its first seminar on Chinese white dolphin and finless porpoise in the afternoon of 7 February 2004. On that day, quite a number of our members and dolphin enthusiasts attended the seminar. Although participants were not very many, we were very delighted to have the chance to gather! The talk was given by our chairman, Samuel Hung. It was



divided into two parts, one was an introduction to the two cetacean species of Hong Kong, and the other one covered Chinese white dolphins in different parts of the world. As the second part had never been talked about in public, even we, as the committee members, learned much from this talk! After the talk, many people stayed behind to have a chat with our committee members. Some of them even filled in the form to become our members! We sincerely thank all participants and supporters. We look forward to meeting you all again soon! Please visit our [website](#) for more photos of the seminar!

Dolphin research trip

In the afternoon of 14 February 2004, HKDCS organized its first dolphin research trip.

When our boat got near to Tai O, the first group of dolphins was spotted. As the group was already surrounded by three small boats, we only watched from afar. It seemed as if the dolphins knew that their dolphin buddies had come to visit them, they approached us and “performed acrobatics” for us! We then sailed southward along the coastline of Lantau and passed Yi O, Peaked Hill and Fan Lau. We met some other dolphins on our way. When we got to Fan Lau Tung Wan, we even met a dolphin with two cuts on its dorsal fin. Researchers had encountered this dolphin for a couple of times, but it hadn't been named yet.



We then noticed a pair-trawler in operation off Fan Lau. Researchers spotted that a pod of dolphin were following the trawlers in search of food. When we got closer, we were all stunned! Groups of dolphins totaling over 20 individuals were leaping out of water right in front of us. We could find mother-and-calf pairs, spotted juveniles, and the pinkish adult dolphin. It was such an unforgettable experience to see

them searching for food happily. On that day, as many as 15 sightings were recorded. And we had a good time with our friends at sea on the Valentine's Day.

Please visit our [website](#) for more photos of the dolphin trip! (Photo credit Samuel Hung)

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Latest status of our Chinese white dolphins in HK

A Chinese White Dolphin off Lamma Island!

In the morning of 12 February 2004, we went on a line-transect boat survey to Lamma Island from Aberdeen as usual. Lamma Island is a hot spot for finless porpoises in late winter and early spring every year, so we expected some porpoise sightings that day. After two hours of work, when we started to get bored, a pinkish shadow suddenly emerged from the blue sea: a Chinese white dolphin! We were all astonished to find a dolphin swimming in



relatively offshore water, southeast to Lamma Island. According to our past records, besides an individual swimming around in Sai Kung water, and another one live-stranded in Sam A Chung, this was the sighting record of Chinese white dolphin farthest away to the southeast from its home range - Lantau.

There was something unusual about this dolphin: it bore some prominent marks on its skin, as if it got some sort of skin infection. We really hope it could get well soon, and be united with its companions. We have taken several photos of its specially-shaped dorsal fin for identification. Primarily, we found that it had not been identified before. Hope that we can see it again in the future.

(Photo credit Samuel Hung)

Valentine's Day - A day we met our beloved dolphins



Fin (NL24) who was recorded most frequently in Hong Kong. It was a spotted adult, and it used to keep a distance from our research vessel. But this time it swam near to us with other dolphins! Another was a younger spotted juvenile, who bore a very obvious long scar on its face, so it was

nicknamed "Scarred-face" in Chinese (its number is NL112). Scarred-face was very active on that day and often came near to the back of our boat, and socialized intensively with other dolphins. Maybe it got a sense that it was Valentine's Day!

(Photo credit Samuel Hung)

In the morning of 14 February 2004, we researchers carried out a line-transect boat survey at Northwest Lantau Island. When our boat neared Northeast of Lung Kwu Chau, a pod of Chinese white dolphins of eleven individuals approached us. When they played happily around our boat, we found some old friends, among which



included Square in Hong Kong. It also kept a very old pal very

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Latest news of our whales and dolphins in the world

Remaining Asian Grey Whales threatened again

The Asian population of grey whales was thought extinct - eradicated from the planet after being hunted by Japanese whalers. But then a small pod of grey whales was rediscovered 30 years ago in remote seas close to Russia's Far East coast.

Protected by conservationists, the number of the Asian grey whale has slowly risen to around 100 today. This population of grey whales has been classified by the IUCN Red List as "Critically Endangered". But now another threat is facing this fragile population.

Near the feeding grounds of the grey whales, there found a massive sources of oil and gas in recent years. All the world's largest oil companies flooded into the region with plans to drill and build oil and gas platforms and pipelines. Conservationists are worried that the feeding grounds would be destroyed by the development plans, and the population will decline to extinction.

This race for natural resources took place at an area just off Russia's Far East coast near the remote Island Sakhalin. Every year when ice breaks in May, the grey whales return here from their winter breeding grounds for foraging. The whales have used this migration route for centuries. The proposed expansion of oil exploitation would involve installing a new production platform at the seaward edge of the feeding ground, and routing four pipelines near and directly through the feeding ground. It is believed that this would disrupt the bottom-feeding grey whales from accessing and using the feeding grounds. Also the whales might be harmed and even killed by collisions with the increased vessel traffic and underwater noises during seismic survey and construction.

Shell is the major enterprise that hopes to make profit from it - to export the natural resources to the growing economies of Asia. It is believed that this will give the company an important foothold in the region. Currently the conservation groups are urging the British government to act to protect the whales in that they only approve loan guarantees to help finance the project only if Shell promises that the pipelines and construction work will not take place in the feeding grounds of grey whales.

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Activities in March

Seminar

Date: 3 April 2004 (Saturday)

Venue: Hong Kong Travel & Tourism Training Centre (2/F, Coin Organize Centre, 13 Pennington Street,
Causeway Bay, Hong Kong)

Time: 2:30 – 3:30 pm (Topic: Issues of Dolphin Captivity)

3:30 - 4:30 pm (Topic: Let's learn more about Chinese white dolphins and finless porpoises in HK)

Member: Free admission

Non-member fee: HK\$20

Dolphin research trip

Date: 13 March (Saturday)

Time period: 2 pm - 6 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Date: 28 March (Sunday)

Time period: 12nm - 4 pm

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the Dolphin HK\$250

Fee for Dolphin Pal / Dolphin Elderly: HK\$200

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member, fee: HK\$250

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Join us now ~ to help protect our dolphins!

You can join as a:

- Friend of the dolphin (individual membership)
- Dolphin Pal (student membership)
- Dolphin Buddy (deluxe membership)
- Dolphin Family (family membership)
- Dolphin Elderly (senior citizen membership)
- Corporate Member
- School / NGOs member
- Student intern

Please visit our website for more details of member privileges!

<http://www.hkdcs.org>

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Coming Activities

Portraits of Dolphins – Art Competition

Caught in nets: WWF identifies dolphins, porpoises most in need of urgent action

Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 2 July 2005 (Saturday)

Gathering Time: 2:00 pm (Please be punctual)

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dismiss Time: 5:00-5:30 pm

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: Free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

For those who are interested in joining please contact our committee member

Winnie at winnie@hkdcs.org.

* In the case of unfavourable weather conditions, participants will be notified one day before of cancellation of the trip.

Portraits of Dolphins – Art Competition

HKDCS, together with AFCD, is holding a joint event in the coming summer,

“Portraits of Dolphins – Art Competition”, with Chinese white dolphin as the main feature of the contest.

The AFCD and HKDCS will hold three public seminars, which will be held by experienced dolphin researchers, and the judges of the competition. The details of the seminars are as follow:

Venue	Date	Speaker	Time
Hong Kong Science Museum Lecture Theatre	4 July 2005 (Monday)	Mr. Samuel Hung (Chairman, HKDCS)	7:15 – 8:15pm
		Ms. Josephine Suk-fan Chow (Chairlady of the Artmatch Group)	8:15 – 9:15pm
Hong Kong Central Library Lecture Theatre	13 July 2005 (Wednesday)	Mr. Samuel Hung (Chairman, HKDCS)	7:15 – 8:15pm
		Ah Chung (Mr. Yee-king Yim) (Renowned Artist)	8:15 – 9:15pm
Sheung Wan Civic Centre Lecture Theatre	23 July 2005 (Saturday)	Ms. Choyce Choi (Vice-chairlady, HKDCS)	3:15 – 4:15pm
		Mr. Norman Wah-man Ko (Professor of the Hong Kong University / Sculptor)	4:15 – 5:15pm

Detailed information is available on our website www.hkdcs.org

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Caught in nets: WWF identifies dolphins, porpoises most in need of urgent action

9 June 2005

Nine dolphin and porpoise populations around the world need immediate action if they are to survive the threat of entanglement in fishing gear. These are the findings of a new WWF report based on a first-ever assessment by leading marine scientists.

According to WWF, bycatch – the capture in fishing gear of unwanted fish and other species – is one of the greatest global threats facing dolphins, porpoises, as well as whales. When caught in fishing nets, many of these cetaceans, which need to come to the surface for air, get trapped underwater and die.

Previous estimates show that more than 300,000 cetaceans are killed in fishing gear each year in the world's oceans. The report indicates these dolphins and porpoises as languishing without attention, but stresses they could recover if changes to fishing methods and other conservation efforts were made.

They include harbour porpoises in the Black Sea, where thousands of porpoises are killed each year; Atlantic humpback dolphins off the coast of West Africa; Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins off the south coast of Tanzania; Spinner dolphins and Fraser's dolphins at Philippines; Irrawaddy dolphins in South East Asia; and Franciscana in South America etc.



A by-caught Irrawaddy dolphin
Photo Credit: Ms. Isabel Beaseley

Most of the species on the list are threatened by the widespread use of one type of fishing gear - gillnets. These nets are difficult for dolphins and porpoises to spot visually or detect with their sonar, so they may become tangled in the netting or in the ropes attached to the nets.

"Almost 1,000 whales, dolphins and porpoises die every day in nets and fishing gear. That's one every two minutes," said Dr Susan Lieberman, Director of WWF's Global Species Programme. "Some species are being pushed to the brink of extinction. Urgent action is needed - and we developed this ranking to help governments and aid agencies know where their money and efforts can really make a difference."

For example, between 1993 and 2003, fisheries in the United States introduced changes, such as modifications of fishing gear, that reduced cetacean bycatch to one-third of its previous levels.

But so far, few of these successful measures have been transferred to other countries, and in much of the rest of the world, progress to reduce bycatch has been slow or

nonexistent.

"Rather than simply identifying the species or populations at greatest risk, or the geographical locations where the bycatch problem is most severe, the group of scientists was asked to emphasize where the prospects for successful intervention were especially good," said Dr Randall Reeves, lead author of the report and the chairman of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group.

The report will be submitted to the International Whaling Commission's scientific committee at its annual meeting next week in the Republic of Korea.

Source: WWF International

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Hong Kong Book Fair 2005

Dolphin game booth and exhibition

New dolphin species confirmed in Australia - Snubfin dolphin

Latest News of HKDCS

Hong Kong Book Fair 2005

Dolphin Pictorial published by the HKDCS - "Chinese white dolphin - a Pearl of Hong Kong" is now for sale at a discounted price in the Hong Kong Book Fair 2005. Do not miss the chance and go visit Booth A27 at the Grand Hall to purchase a copy!

Coming Activities

Dolphin game booth and exhibition

A carnival promoting resource recycling will be held on 30 July (Sat) by the Sheng Kung Hui Tung Chung Integrated Services. HKDCS will take part in the activity, setting game booth and exhibition to arouse public awareness about dolphin conservation

Activity details:

Date: 30 July

Time: 2 - 5 pm

Venue: Amphitheater outside Fu Tung Shopping Centre, Tung Chung (beside Tung Chung MTR Station)

We look forward to seeing you there!

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

New dolphin species confirmed in Australia - Snubfin dolphin

6 July 2005

A new species of dolphin has been found living in the warm tropical waters of northern Australia. Scientists had always thought the dolphins were a local variation of the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), a species which ranges into Southeast Asia. But marine biologists have found enough differences in the population to declare it a separate species, the Australian snubfin dolphin. It derives its name from its short, stubby dorsal fin.

Identifying a new species is a rare event in the cetacean world and researchers from James Cook University and the Museum of Tropical Queensland, both in Townsville, are celebrating the find. "There are clear differences between the two populations that had not been previously recognised and these were confirmed by the studies on DNA," said Isabel Beasley, a PhD student and research team member. The dolphins, mostly found in shallow coastal waters, are susceptible to being caught in fishing and anti-shark nets. Coastal development may also affect their health.

Scientists have no idea how numerous they are - around 200 are believed to live in the ocean off Townsville, northern Queensland, and there is an unknown number living in the rest of the species' range, which extends to Western Australia. "Even though Australia is a developed country ... more is known about the Mekong River dolphin population in Cambodia than the Australian species," said Peter Arnold, of the Museum of Tropical Queensland. They have been given the Latin name *Orcaella heinsohni*, after George Heinsohn, a researcher who studied dolphins in the 1970s.

Source: New Zealand Herald



A stranded snubfin dolphin

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Reef Check 2005

Military Practice in Taiwan may be the cause of abnormal cetacean stranding

Coming Activities

Reef Check 2005

This year HKDCS is for the second time taking part in the "Reef Check 2005", which is organized by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and Reef Check Foundation. This activity aims at arousing public awareness of the ecological value of coral reef, the threats facing it and its conservation. In the activity teams of scuba divers collect data from coral communities in all parts of Hong Kong waters, enabling AFCD and other green groups to protect the corals in a better way. In fact, besides dolphin, HKDCS cares much about the marine environment of Hong Kong. That is why we participate in this event in a hope to help preserve the marine ecosystem.



This year, there are a total of 33 teams participating in such event, HKDCS, the same as last year, is responsible for carrying out the one-day coral survey in Tai She Wan, Sai Kung. If you would like to help in marine conservation and possess a scuba diving qualification, you should not miss this annual event! If you do not dive, you can also come snorkel with us.

Below are the details of the activity:

Date: 11 September 2005 (Sunday)

Gathering Time: 9:30 am

Gathering Venue: Hebe Haven Ferry Pier (To be confirmed)

In the morning we will leave for Tai She Wan by a pleasure boat conducting coral survey. Afternoon will be our leisure time, in which we will go to Bluff Island to dive and snorkel for fun! Lunch will be provided to all participants of this activity.

Fee: HK\$150 (members)

HK\$180 (non-members)

You can rent diving and snorkeling equipments through us, and the price depends on equipment type.

If you are interested in joining this coral exploration trip, please contact our committee member Choyce Choi.

E-mail: choyce@hkdc.org

Tel: 2866-2652

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Military Practice in Taiwan may be the cause of abnormal cetacean stranding

9 August 2005

In the past month, a number of cetacean stranding incidents occurred at northern coast of Taiwan. Altogether 20 individuals were washed ashore within 10 days, which belong to several oceanic or deep water species including striped dolphin, Longman's beaked whale, Blainville's beaked whale, pygmy sperm whale and dwarf sperm whale. It is thought that the recent frequent stranding events might be related to the "Hanguang" military exercise taking place in Taiwanese waters.

Indeed, scientists' belief that military maneuver at sea does threaten cetacean survival is valid. In 2002, the United States Navy used mid-frequency 53C sonar during their military maneuver in Bahamas, resulting in mass stranding of 15 individuals of beaked whale. Postmortem reports of six of the stranded beaked whales indicated that these carcasses were fresh; bore no sign of sickness, vessel collision and fishery bycatch. However, these carcasses had injuries with blood stasis at their auditory organs; and the part of their brains near ears showed signs of bleeding. Blood clots have also been found in their blood vessels, which appeared before death. These symptoms might not have caused their instant death or permanent loss of hearing ability, but might disturb them for a period and made them get lost and eventually strand. Also, three of the beaked whales stranded were found with blood stasis at their lower jaws and melons, which were believed to be caused by strong acoustic wave. Finally upon negotiations the US Navy agreed to halt the testing of Low-Frequency Active Sonar, which is stronger than the 53C mid-frequency sonar, in 75% of global seas, including Taiwanese offshore waters.

Dr. John Y. Wang of the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium of Taiwan stated in the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in July 2004 that a series of strandings occurring in Taiwanese and Chinese waters in February and March that year might be related to the military exercises carried out in Philippine water by the US Navy in February. Dr. Wang had conducted necropsy on a Ginkgo-toothed beaked whale stranded at Pingtung County in February 2004 and found that all its organs related to hearing and diving bore abnormal blood stasis and injuries. After investigation by other foreign experts, it was confirmed that death of the Ginkgo-toothed beaked whale resulted from powerful blast or acoustic energy (e.g. sonar). Whether the recent strandings in Taiwan are related to military maneuver is still awaiting investigations of experts.

The series of stranding events have also aroused attention and concerns from international conservation groups. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the Natural Resources Defense Council have already written letters to the Taiwanese President Office and the Agriculture Council, requesting them to carry out necropsy by international experts on the cetaceans that were stranded for unknown reasons. However, the government has yet to respond to the requests at the moment.

Source: FormosaCetus Research and Conservation Group
<http://www.formosacetus.org/fc%20main.htm>

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HKDCS recognized as charitable organization

New Release! Summer 2005 newsletter and 2003-05 Annual Report

Date with the Dolphins

Poor evacuation plans to blame for captive dolphins being swept out to sea by Katrina

Latest News of HKDCS

HKDCS recognized as charitable organization

HKDCS was recognized as a charitable organization by the Government with effect from 14 July 2005. Since then, receipts can be issued to donors for donations over HK\$100 made to HKDCS for tax deduction purpose.

Being recognized as charitable organization represents a milestone of HKDCS. We would like to take this chance to reform our membership system to let more people join our dolphin conservation force. Details will be announced in due course.

New Release! Summer 2005 newsletter and 2003-05 Annual Report

HKDCS has already sent out the 3rd volume of the half-yearly newsletter (Summer 2005) to all members in early January. If you haven't received it yet, please give us a call at 2866-2652. Besides, the colored version of the newsletter and the 2003-05 annual report have already been uploaded to our website, please go check them out at www.hkdcs.org

HKDCS Latest Activity

Date with the Dolphins

HKDCS will host the “Date with the Dolphins” function on 15-16 October (Saturday & Sunday) at the Island Resort Mall, Siu Sai Wan. The function will include Whales and Dolphins Photo Exhibition and a parent-child workshop. Details are as follows:

Photo Exhibition and HKDCS counter (12:00-20:00 on 15-16 October)

- n A showcase of whales and dolphins in different parts of the world
- n Distribute HKDCS leaflets and tickets for the parent-child workshop
- n Sales of Chinese white dolphin pictorial and souvenirs of HKDCS

Little Dolphin Parent-child Workshop (afternoon of 16 October with 4 sessions: 1:00-1:45/2:00-2:45/3:30-4:15/4:30-5:15)

- n Assist children and their parents in making a dolphin with paper clay, so as to promote dolphin conservation.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

Poor evacuation plans to blame for captive dolphins being swept out to sea by Katrina

16 September 2005

While praising the efforts of federal and local officials in a dramatic rescue of eight escaped dolphins found in the polluted waters of the Mississippi Sound, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) cautioned against allowing a repeat of the situation when the next big hurricane comes along.

HSUS urged that the government agencies involved carefully scrutinize the operator's decision to leave the animals behind and deny approval of any proposals to reconstruct the Marine Life Oceanarium in Gulfport, Miss. in a

location that will not ensure the future safety of the animals.

The dolphins miraculously survived being left behind at the facility, but were swept out to sea as the storm surge overwhelmed their tank, an occurrence that should have been anticipated, given the urgent warnings and massive publicity about Katrina.

The escaped dolphins have lived most or all of their lives in captivity and do not necessarily have the survival skills to fend for themselves in the wild. They were found in a location heavily contaminated with oil and other toxic substances and the bodies of thousands of dead chickens from nearby factory farms. The dolphins are being treated for infected wounds and malnutrition.

"What happened to these dolphins this time will happen again if the aquarium is rebuilt in the same location," Dr. Naomi Rose, marine mammal scientist for The HSUS, said. "Marine Life Oceanarium was right on the shore in a hurricane zone. Katrina's destruction has validated our long-held concerns about all coastal public display facilities in the Gulf and Caribbean regions. "

Before Katrina struck, six dolphins from the Oceanarium were moved inland to hotel swimming pools and were subsequently evacuated to Florida. Nineteen sea lions also were missing from the Oceanarium, but most have now been recovered; five were confirmed dead. Two dolphins have already been rescued and are being held in a hotel swimming pool until the temporary saltwater tanks are prepared.

The HSUS recommends that all captive marine mammal facilities in hurricane prone zones reconsider the adequacy of their evacuation plans in light of this disaster.

Source: HSUS

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Date with the Dolphins - ~ Photo exhibition and Little Dolphin Workshop

8 Oct Japan Dolphin Day

20 October 2005

Groups Vow to Stop Japan Dolphin Slaughter

Date with the Dolphins

~ Photo exhibition and Little Dolphin Workshop

The "Date with the Dolphins" activity held on 15-16 October at Island Resort, Siu Sai Wan ended with great success. We set up a photo exhibition showing photos of Chinese white dolphins and other species of whales and dolphins, as well as our counter there. At the counter we distributed HKDCS leaflets, sold dolphin pictorials and dolphin souvenirs. The two-day exhibition attracted around 700 visitors altogether.



Besides, in the afternoon of 16 October, we held a "Little Dolphin



Workshop", in which we taught the participants about knowledge of dolphins and instructed children and their

parents to make little dolphins using paperclay. This workshop finally drew 41 participants.



8 Oct Japan Dolphin Day

On 8 October 2005, numerous cetacean conservation and animal right organizations from 30 countries gathered in front of Japanese embassies and consulates protesting the dolphin slaughter in Japan, which starts in October every year. HKDCS took part in the protest by collecting several hundred protest letters from the public and had them sent to the Japanese consulate in Hong Kong. Besides, three local newspapers (including Mingpao, Hong Kong Economic Times and Apple Daily) reported the dolphin slaughter in Japan. And, Mr. Samuel Hung, the chairman of HKDCS, has also been invited to attend a phone-in radio program of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to discuss the issue with the host and the audience. For more information about the demonstrations in other parts of the world, please refer to the following website:

<http://www.earthisland.org/saveTaijiDolphins/japanDolphinDayReports.html>

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

20 October 2005

Groups Vow to Stop Japan Dolphin Slaughter

An international consortium of environmental organizations today announced their ongoing dedication to bringing the horror and shame of the Japan dolphin killing to the world's attention.

Once again, Ric O'Barry, former trainer of TV star Flipper and marine mammal specialist for One Voice, a leading French animal welfare organization, and his coalition team will return shortly to the fishing village of Taiji, where the dolphin slaughter takes place annually.

"Our team is here to bear witness to the tragedy of the largest deliberate dolphin slaughter in the world," Helene O'Barry, field correspondent for One Voice-France stated. "We will be in Taiji and Futo documenting the slaughter, and we will not relent in our outreach and media efforts until this cruel practice is finally abolished."

"We know the international aquarium industry is secretly subsidizing the violent slaughter of thousands of dolphins in Taiji and Futo," stated David Phillips, Director of the International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute. "They are trafficking internationally in a few dolphins for the captive trade; the rest are ruthlessly slaughtered."

"On October 8th, demonstrations were held in thirty countries demanding an end to the Japan dolphin slaughter," David Phillips added. "The Japan dolphin slaughter will no longer remain a shameful secret."

Sakae Hemmi, spokesperson for Elsa Nature Conservancy states that, "The aquarium industry subsidizes the slaughter by offering thousands of dollars to buy a few prime specimens of dolphins from the shallow waters of the blood-filled slaughter pools. Without these enormous prices for prime specimens, it will be quite difficult for the drive fishery to survive, for dolphin meat is much contaminated with mercury."

Yet the Japan Fisheries Agency does nothing to stop the dolphin hunt nor give enough warning to Japanese consumers about the dangers of eating dolphin meat. The Japan Fisheries Agency admits that dolphin meat is contaminated with mercury, but only gives limited advice on how to eat it.

David Phillips stated: "The public, including the people of Japan, would be outraged if they knew the truth -- that thousands of innocent dolphins die a horrible death so that a few can be shown doing tricks in aquariums.

Added Ric O'Barry: "The drive fishery and the slaughter must be stopped, and the aquarium industry should be ashamed of sponsoring the killing of thousands of dolphins annually."

Source : One Voice France, Elsa Nature Conservancy of Japan , Earth Island Institute

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Dolphin Reporters

Dolphin Research Trip

U.S. Federals list Puget Sound orcas as Endangered

Activity Review

“Dolphin Reporters”

The recruitment of “Dolphin Reporters”, which was an activity co-organized by the HKDCS and Youth Kwun Tong has come to an end on 31 October. There were a number of participants in the activity who tried their best to collect information about wild dolphins in Hong Kong during the contest. They learned a lot about dolphins and the importance of environmental protection and nature conservation.



Finally, a champion, a first runner-up and three second runner-ups have been selected, and the prize presentation ceremony was held in Sau Mau Ping Shopping Centre on 19 November.



The Champion Dolphin Reporter

Coming Activities

Dolphin Research Trip

Date: 8 January 2006 (Sunday)

Gathering Time: 9:00 am (Please be punctual)

Gathering Point: Exit B of Tung Chung MTR Station

Dismiss Time: 12:30 - 1:00 pm

Dolphin Buddy, Dolphin Family: Free admission (for once)

Fee for Friend of the dolphin, Dolphin Pal and Dolphin Elderly: HK\$150 per head

Non-member: must be accompanied by any member; Fee: HK\$180 per head

* In case of unfavorable weather conditions, participants will be notified one day before of cancellation of the trip.

Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

U.S. Federals list Puget Sound orcas as Endangered

15 November 2005

A group of killer whales that visits Washington state's Puget Sound every summer has been listed as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) announced today.

Known officially as Southern Resident killer whales, they were proposed a year ago for "threatened" status under the Endangered Species Act.

"Recent information and further analysis leads our agency to conclude that the Southern Resident killer whale population is at risk of extinction, and should be listed as endangered," said Bob Lohn, regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries Service's Northwest region. "By giving it protection under the ESA, we have a better chance of keeping this population alive for future generations."

The Southern Resident killer whale population experienced a 20 percent

decline in the 1990s, raising concerns about its future. Many members of the group were captured during the 1970s for commercial display aquariums.

The group continued to be put at risk from vessel traffic, toxic chemicals and limits on availability of food, especially salmon. It has only a small number of sexually mature males. Because the population historically has been small, it is susceptible to catastrophic risks, such as disease or oil spills.

Southern Resident killer whales already are protected, as are all marine mammals, by a 1972 law, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, under which the whales were officially listed as a depleted stock more than two years ago. A proposed conservation plan required by the depleted designation was published last month laying out the steps needed to restore the population to full health.

The population peaked at 97 animals in the 1990s and then declined to 79 in 2001. It currently stands at 89 whales, including a solitary male that has taken up residence in a small inlet in British Columbia.

Although researchers have collected more than 30 years' worth of information on the Southern Residents, agency biologists said there are major gaps in knowledge, such as where the animals go when they're not in local waters. Because killer whales may live up to 90 years in the wild, existing data doesn't cover even one full life span for older animals. Research by NOAA Fisheries Service scientists to fill these gaps will continue, the agency said.

Source: NOAA Fisheries Service

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Dolphin Research Trip

New Measures Urged to Protect Dolphins

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Latest news of whales and dolphins in the world

New Measures Urged to Protect Dolphins

28 November 2005

The United Nations called Wednesday for stricter measures to protect dolphins and other marine mammals environmentalists see as adored by humans, since more than two-thirds of them face growing threats to their survival.

The Nairobi-based U.N. Environment Program said more than 70 percent of small cetaceans, including dolphins, porpoises and small whales, are at risk of being caught in fishing nets, while smaller numbers are threatened by dam building, sewage dumping and underwater military sonar operations. Tough new protective steps must be taken to ensure the survival of at least eight species of small cetaceans, it said in a report presented to parties of the Convention of Migratory Species at U.N. Environment Program headquarters in Kenya.

"Small cetaceans are amongst the world's most well-loved and charismatic creatures on the planet," U.N. Environment Program executive director Klaus Toepfer said in a statement. "Sadly, these qualities alone cannot protect them from a wide range of threats, so I fully endorse measures to strengthen their conservation through the (Convention of Migratory Species) and other agreements," he said.

His comments followed the release of the report on 71 small cetacean species, which found many increasingly at risk from fishing nets, being harvested for food or shark bait and noise and environmental pollution.

Particularly threatened by fishermen are the Atlantic spotted dolphin, the pygmy sperm whale, the Blainville's beaked whale and the Hector's dolphin (See Figure) — the world's rarest marine mammal with fewer than 4,000 in existence — it said. Three species are at risk from noise pollution created by naval sonar tests, which have been linked to mass strandings and deaths of whales — like the Cuvier's and Blainville's — in the Ionian, Caribbean and Mediterranean seas, it said.



The report also said high concentrations of chemical pollutants in the Arctic Ocean were causing gastric ulcers and higher rates of parasitic infections in narwhals, beluga whales and pygmy killer whales.

Source : Animal Planet News