

Gesellschaft zur Rettung der Delphine (GRD)  
(Society for Dolphin Conservation, Germany)



## DELPHINPOST

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### Contents:

- |   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
| ◆ | GRD's Project to "Save the Last Adriatic Dolphins:<br>Dolphins in View                | p. 2 |
| ◆ | Dolphin Conservation in Peru:<br>News on our Adoption Dolphins in Paracas             | p. 3 |
| ◆ | ECS Conference in Stralsund – Harbor Porpoise in Focus                                | p. 4 |
| ◆ | Harbor Porpoise Conservation Campaign:<br>Environmentally Sound Disposal of Munitions | p. 5 |
| ◆ | Consumer Tip: Dolphin-SAFE Tuna   | p. 5 |
| ◆ | Dominica: Sperm Whale and Marine Conservation   | p. 6 |
| ◆ | Commercial Whaling to Resume?   | p. 6 |

*Translation (articles): Dennis McAllister*

## **GRD's Project to "Save the Last Adriatic Dolphins" Dolphins in View**

*Since 2001, holidaymakers in Croatia have actively been taking part in our project to save the last of the Adriatic dolphins. Detailed information on dolphin sightings, which can be entered into forms provided by and sent to the GRD, help us discover more about the "preferred sites" of the bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). Again in 2010, holidaymakers in Croatia are being called on to participate. Sighting report forms can be found at [www.adriadelfine.de](http://www.adriadelfine.de).*

### **2009 Dolphin sighting reports**

Thank you to everyone who sent in their dolphin sighting forms for the Croatian Adriatic in 2009. The data is evaluated by our Croatian partners – veterinarians and scientists at the University of Zagreb– and incorporated into surveys and analyses compiled by member nations of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). They are a part of the assessment foundation for measures to protect threatened dolphin populations and preserve their habitats.

We received nearly 90 reports in total, spanning the entire Croatian coast from the very north to the very south. It was a touching and unforgettable experience for many visitors, whether because of the popular marine mammals' playful behavior and curiosity or seeing the dolphins for the first time after being a regular visitor to Croatia for the first time in 20 years.

### **Impressive schools**

Various observers were incredibly lucky in getting to view groups of 30 animals in the Kvarner Gulf and near Split. Such large groups of coastal bottlenose dolphins are more the exception than the rule. Another observant sailor discovered a common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), which, unfortunately, has become a rarity in the Adriatic. Where their numbers were once strong, they are now a rare visitor. The sighting of a loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) was even reported to us.

More information from previous years, including some photos and short videos, can be found at [www.adriadelfine.de](http://www.adriadelfine.de)

### **Adoption dolphins**

Our field work has also been successful. For the first time in a while, our adoption dolphins Crta ("Line") and Poveliki ("Mr Big") were seen in the waters off Zadar. Although the resident bottlenose dolphins don't go further than 5 km from the coast, their entire habitat extends the considerable length of 1778 km. Whether certain animals inhabit smaller "territories" is another question that should be answered with the help of field work. If this were the case, special measures should be developed to protect these areas.

### **Dolphin Conservation Center**

The focus of this year's project work is the development of the dolphin conservation center on the island of Molat. We urgently need €5,000 for the initial renovation work, such as the modernization of water tanks and sanitation facilities. Please help. Every donation counts! Donations marked "Center" will be used for the dolphin conservation center on Molat.

*Ulrike Kirsch*

### **Save the last Adriatic Dolphins**

Some 220 bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are living in the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea. After the extinction of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) and the common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), bottlenose dolphins are the only marine mammals still living in the Adriatic Sea.

The dolphins are facing threats from entanglement in fishing nets, overfishing, deliberate killing, and high-speed watercraft. 50 per cent of the dead cetaceans found along Croatian coasts die from human impacts.

Together with veterinary faculty members of Zagreb University and the organization VAL ([www.val-nature.hr](http://www.val-nature.hr)), GRD founded the project to "Save the Last Adriatic Dolphins" in 1999 to ensure their long-term survival in this habitat. Important objectives include

- the establishment of protected areas.
- the establishment of a marine mammal research and conservation center on the island of Molat.
- awareness raising activities to sensitize the public at large about the threatened marine mammals and the need to protect them.

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### **Dolphin Conservation in Peru News on our Adoption Dolphins in Paracas**

The main tasks of our now 11-year-old Peru project this last year were continuing the dolphin conservation activities in Paracas and increasing awareness of the negative effects of unsustainable fishing. Studying and learning about the two resident dolphin groups living off the Paracas Peninsula down to the individual level helps us to inform the general public about dolphin conservation and problems like dynamite fishing or marine pollution.

#### **The Paracas dolphins**

Regular trips were made onto Paracas Bay to observe the bottlenose dolphins. Of the 87 individuals who have been identified, 28 were found in the bay. Pegs (with young one), Pacman, Flucky, Ghost, Silver, Trinity (with newborn), Tatoo, Bodo, Cosmo, Longscar (with young one), Queen, Breeze, Pisco, Halley, Bay, Sharpy, Big Nose (with newborn), Silver (with young one) were seen. Four new individuals were identified based on their fins and photographed. The bottlenose dolphins swam in groups of 6 to 26 animals. The average group size was 13.6. This relatively high number can be explained by the fact that the dolphins have become accustomed to gather around fishing boats entering the bay and fish offloading areas to grab an extra meal.

Big Nose's calf is the first to exhibit the mysterious skin disease that many of the Paracas dolphins, including its mother, are suffering from. Waste water disposal from fish meal factories, surrounding homes or toxic substances used to clean the fishing boats must be the cause of the disease. A detailed analysis is necessary in order to take corrective action.

## The Supay dolphins

A newborn calf was also discovered in the small, isolated group of Supay dolphins (named after the bay of the same name) who live in the Paracas National Reserve. It was swimming next to a very large dolphin, perhaps its mother, who could not be identified. As in past years, these dolphins generally swam in a very tight formation in groups of 12 to 18 individuals.

Changes to the zoning of the Paracas National Reserve will soon take place and ACOREMA and GRD want to ensure that the habitat of these bottlenose dolphins continues to have special protected status and that economic use will not be allowed.

*Denise Wenger*

This project is supported by the Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH; *German Environmental Aid*) and the German organic food company *Rapunzel Naturkost AG* through the HAND-IN-HAND Fund.

### You can help!

#### Pieces for Paracas:

Any amount of donation, no matter how small or big, will help to reconstruct the marine conservation center, which was destroyed in an earthquake in 2007. For further information please check: <http://www.peru-delfine.de>

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### ECS Conference in German Oceanographic Museum Stralsund: Harbor Porpoise in Focus

At this year's European Cetacean Society conference, which was held in Stralsund from March 20-25, 2010, the GRD participated with a scientific poster on our "Weser harbor porpoises" project and an information stand in cooperation with our partner Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH; *German Environmental Aid*).

Over 400 whale experts from around the world came to devote themselves to workshops, lectures and a poster exhibition about important questions about the future of whales worldwide. What is the impact of climate change on whale numbers? How can the enormous fishing by-catch of over 300,000 marine mammals per year be prevented? To what extent does anthropogenic noise disturb acoustically oriented animals in their habitat? It was also about how projects could be supported by technology (transmitters, satellites, sensors and so-called porpoise click loggers), because the study of whales in the sea is very expensive.

Our poster (see [www.weserwale.de](http://www.weserwale.de)), featuring the first published proof of the renewed regular appearance of harbor porpoises in the Weser, was met with interest and appreciation by harbor porpoise experts.

GRD and DUH call for a better protection of the harbor porpoises because their numbers are declining at an alarming rate in some areas. The Baltic Sea population of harbor porpoises (see Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals, [www.gsm-ev.de](http://www.gsm-ev.de)), the only cetaceans resident in German waters, is acutely threatened with extinction. This small species is mainly threatened by drift

and gill nets, where it unintentionally ends up as by-catch. But even underwater noise caused by pile driving during the construction of wind turbines or oil platforms at sea affects harbor porpoise populations. The GRD, GSM and DUH will work together with other organizations for the increased protection of the harbor porpoise. Alternative fishing methods and noise-reduction measures, for example the use of bubble curtains during the construction of wind turbines, must be enforced at a national and international level to ensure that the harbor porpoise continues to be at home in the North and Baltic Seas.

*DUH/Denise Wenger*

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### **Harbor Porpoise Conservation Campaign “Environmentally Sound Disposal of Munitions”**

Since 2007, we have applied ourselves, together with NABU Schleswig-Holstein and the Society for the Protection of Marine Mammals (GSM), to the environmentally sound disposal of 1.3 million tons of munitions that have been dumped into the North and Baltic Seas since World War II. Besides TNT, the military waste includes heavy metals and lethal nerve gases. Their removal was usually done in the easiest and, for the underwater world and for the highly endangered harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea, deadliest way: through blasting.

In 2008, in order to dampen the explosion noise caused by the blasting that is extremely dangerous to the harbor porpoise, the army, the Waterways and Shipping Administration and the state of Schleswig-Holstein under pressure from environmental groups began conducting bubble curtain tests, which were continued in February of 2009 and 2010. A much larger bubbling shield was made at the “Kolberg Heath” munitions dumpsite near Heidkate this time for the five blasts made. Following evaluation of the initial results, the tests were very successful.

We are hopeful that the reusable bubble curtain system will become the standard technology in those cases where munitions have to be blasted because their recovery is impossible for reasons of safety. This would be a big and important success for our joint efforts to better protect Baltic Sea harbor porpoises.

*Ulrich Karlowski*

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### **Consumer Tip: Dolphin-SAFE Tuna**

Make sure that when you buy tuna you see this logo. The copyrighted SAFE logo by the American environmental organization Earth Island Institute (EII) stands for reliability and transparency. It is only awarded to companies affiliated with the ISO-certified international dolphin safe tuna monitoring program and regularly monitored by the GRD and EII. Further information and a current list of approved German tuna importers, retailers and brands can be found at [www.thunfischliste.de](http://www.thunfischliste.de) (also see [www.dolphin-safe.org](http://www.dolphin-safe.org)).




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## **Project DOMINICA Sperm Whale and Marine Conservation**

2009 brought one piece of bad news and a lot of positive findings about the “Group of Seven” adoption whales. The female Puzzle Piece, who always stayed a little outside the group, wasn’t seen again. She is definitely no longer a part of the “Group of Seven” and has migrated or died.

Although the group has lost a member, it still has seven members. Females Mysterio and Pinchy had calves in 2008. The “Group of Seven” now consists of grown sperm whales Mysterio, Pinchy, Fingers, Quasimodo as well as the young bull Scar and the babies Enigma and Scrape. They are growing up beautifully. We know from our underwater observations that they are males. Their mothers, Mysterio and Pinchy, leave them alone more often now to dive down to eat or to meet peers miles away. Meanwhile, Enigma and Scrape enjoy themselves and play together at the surface. Sometimes, they try to play with the nearly grown, 11-year-old bull Scar (also an offspring of Pinchy). We were very surprised to see the juvenile male play with the little ones. He showed “his best side” and was playful and affectionate.

We were especially amazed by the female Fingers. We had the impression that she had become a little fatter and was intensely caring for Mysterio and Pinchy's offspring. The baby Enigma even tried to nurse from Fingers. Based on her behavior, we suspect that she is pregnant. We shall see...

### **Conclusion and outlook**

2009 was, despite the disappearance of Puzzle Piece, a very successful year in every sense. Sperm whale research and whale watching programs for children were intensified. We look forward to 2010 with confidence that the children's program will be expanded. Word has got so much around about our offer that the available project funds are not nearly sufficient to take on the increasing demand by schools.

*Ulrich Karlowski*

*(Article based on information provided by Andrea and Wilfried Steffen)*

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### **Commercial Whaling to Resume?**

The future of whales is at stake. Commercial hunting of the ocean giants could soon be allowed again and the floodgates opened to slaughter, because even before the next meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in June 2010, an agreement has been made behind closed doors following years of pressure by Japan, Norway and Iceland. The whaling ban (moratorium) from 1986 is to be lifted, coastal whaling permitted and even commercial hunting in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary will be “officially” allowed.

Germany also supports this proposal, which constitutes a betrayal of whale protection and has sacrificed the whales with badly led negotiations and inconsistent action in the past and poor compromises. We will not allow this. Please support us in making Germany's voice clear regarding the comprehensive protection of whales. Demand that Agricultural Minister Ilse Aigner and the German IWC delegation speak out against the enabling of commercial whaling and for the upholding of the

moratorium and the improvement of the protection of whales. A protest campaign can be found on our homepage at [www.delphinschutz.org](http://www.delphinschutz.org), "Your voice for whales".

Japan and Norway have killed thousands of whales every year for decades following self-imposed quotas despite the moratorium and despite IWC recommendations or the public opinion of the rest of the world. If the hunt is allowed officially, who will ensure that these and other countries such as Russia, who might resume whaling, will comply with "official" quotas if they aren't doing that now? Who will monitor the hunt? The aim of whaling countries is also to loosen the current ban on the trade in whale meat. However, if whale meat comes onto the international market, illegal activities will be uncontrollable and the decimation of highly threatened whale species could be the result.

### **Whales around the world in danger**

Moreover, prevailing whaling killing methods at sea are insufficient and inhumane. The ethical question remains whether a civilized world society wants to see intelligent mammals like dolphins and whales, or even great apes, merely as resources and, despite their threatened status, allow their horrible slaughter.

The survival of whales is largely threatened today by industrial fishing (by-catch and scarcity of food resources), the effects of climate change (ocean warming, decrease in krill numbers and other food resources) and marine pollution with toxic substances (mercury, PCBs, plastics). It's for this reason that additional protective measures such as the establishment of strictly protected areas, a different fishing policy with truly sustainable use of healthy fish stocks and a drastic reduction of by-catch through different fishing methods must be taken and all commercial whaling remain banned.

*Denise Wenger*