

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

WILD DOLPHIN PROJECT

25 Years and Counting!

25 Years and Counting!!

Welcome to yet another newsletter of the Wild Dolphin Project. As of 2009 we have now finished 25 years in the field! Amazingly we are still tracking some of the same individuals that we have known since 1985. Some of you will remember Stubby, Romeo, Big Gash, Little Gash, and Mugsy, who are still around. Little Gash is a grandmother, Romeo is a verified grandfather, and Mugsy continues to have offspring! So, that makes three generations of dolphins!

I am also pleased to let you know that after some difficult years after the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 the dolphins have re-stabilized and are reproducing as normal. This year we had a great calf year, totaling 10 new youngsters. And although we have not yet found, or seen, any of our lost hurricane individuals, we continue to look. New bottlenose dolphins have moved into the area, and just this year new spotted dolphins. So, life goes on for the dolphins after all.

The Wild Dolphin Project is facing, like all non-profits these days, difficult financial times. Although we are used to being a lean, mean research machine, the recession has been more difficult than any other time in my 25 years running the project. I wanted to personally thank all of you for being ongoing loyal donors and members over the years as you continue to answer our call for help. We appreciate it!

And although this year we had hoped to have a large celebration for our 25-year mark, we are scaling down an event for the spring. So please check in with our website as we determine a date and event to celebrate with you, our members and friends, our long-term work in the Bahamas!

Squeaks and whistles,

Dr. Denise Herzing,

Founder and Research Director

Stubby - at least 40 years old!



Little Gash - still inquisitive at over 25 years old!



Lava (13 years old) and her first calf, Legend (male, born this year!)



Mugsy (over 25 years old) and her 4th calf Meridian (female, 2 years old)

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Long-term male alliance Big Gash (back) and Romeo (front), both at least 40 years old

The First Days of a New Project...

This fall marked the beginning of a new project for WDP, work in Florida. The first step was to obtain a NMFS permit. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, it is illegal to interact or approach marine mammals in US waters without a research permit. These types of regulations are vital to help protect marine mammals. After successfully obtaining a NMFS permit to research cetaceans in Palm Beach and Southern Martin Counties, we began our Florida Expansion Project. This permit allows us to approach cetacean groups, take photographs and collect data at the surface only (we do not work underwater in Florida). There are two parts to this project: offshore and Intracoastal.

The primary goal of the offshore work is to determine the cetacean diversity in the study area. We want to determine what species are present and in what abundance. For this work we utilize our large research vessel, *Stenella*. This gives us a stable platform that can easily explore the offshore waters of South Florida. Little is known about what species are present here, but we expect to find both dolphins and whales in these waters.

The Intracoastal work is focused on the bottlenose dolphins that inhabit the waterway. We want to identify individuals and learn about their distribution and social structure. For this work we use a smaller vessel, our 14' Novourania, named *frontalis*. This allows us to easily maneuver in the Intracoastal to document the dolphins that we see.

The first day of Florida work began on September 23, 2009, on *frontalis* in the Intracoastal. We ventured into the northern part of our study area. We spent a good 8 hours on the water, but unfortunately did not find any dolphins. Though a little discouraged, we reminded ourselves that this is a part of field work: days like this will occur, as dolphins are wild animals and we may not see them every day we go out. With this in mind, we began positive thinking for our next survey.

Our next outing was offshore aboard *Stenella* on September 26, 2009. The weather was beautiful as we worked the northern area offshore. The morning was uneventful, but the afternoon provided great excitement. The first species we encountered was spotted dolphins (see picture on right) – the same species we study in the Bahamas! We had a small group and found that they behaved similarly to our Bahamas population. They were friendly and remained near the boat, allowing us to easily photograph their dorsal fins. Contrary to the Bahamas population, however, their dorsal fins were very distinctive, which will allow us to identify them from the surface. We were lucky again as we found a group of bottlenose dolphins. They too were similar to the bottlenose we study in the Bahamas, a little shy and harder to photograph; however, we were able to obtain good photographs of the individuals in the small group. Our first day offshore was a great success, finding two different species of cetaceans.



In November we took *frontalis* out in the southern part of the study area. We had a much more successful day than our first outing. In the afternoon we found 2 small groups of bottlenose feeding in the Intracoastal (see picture on left). We have noticed a lot of baitfish (including mullet) activity, and the dolphins were taking advantage of this. One of them even did some beautiful aerials after chasing some fish at the surface. It was an exciting day on the Intracoastal!

Our first few surveys have shown us that there are many cetaceans in our South Florida waters and great potential for The Florida Expansion Project. We will be gathering much needed information about the cetaceans of these previously little-researched South Florida waters in the days, months, and years ahead. We invite you to join us on this journey and become a

Cetacean Sighter! Membership is \$500 for the year, September – April. As a member of the Cetacean Sighters you will be invited to join us on these Florida surveys. Members will be rotated so that everyone has an equal chance to participate. Call the office, or email Cindy at celliser@wilddolphinsproject.org for more information.

Cindy Elliser, M.S.
Research Assistant, PhD Candidate



2009 No Show Holiday Ball

The Board of Directors of the Wild Dolphin Project requests the honor of your absence at the most important social function not held this holiday season...

*The Wild Dolphin Project's 12th Annual No Show Holiday Ball
Thursday the 31st of December, Two Thousand Nine*

You are cordially invited to enjoy an evening however you choose. Whether it is a quiet evening at home with family, friends and pets or a night on the town, just have fun and don't show up at our No Show Ball!

Your contribution will benefit the continuation of long-term research conducted by the Wild Dolphin Project (www.wilddolphinproject.org), founded in 1985.

Prizes

Each donation to WDP through the No Show Holiday Ball form entitles each guest to a chance to win one of our grand prizes and/or one of our door prizes. The best parts are, you must not be present to win, and contributions are fully tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Grand Prizes

Research Trip 2010: Minimum donation \$100

This is our most popular item and a fabulous deal! You will be a passenger on one of our summer research trips on board our research vessel Stenella. This is a 9-day cruise with WDP crew to Little Bahama Bank during our field season, May-September, 2010. Assist with the research to learn what it takes to be a marine mammal researcher. Swim with the dolphins, learn about these amazing animals, and snorkel with other interesting marine life off some very exciting reefs and shipwrecks.



Cetacean Sighter Membership 2010-2011: Minimum donation \$50

As a member, you will be informed when WDP will be conducting Florida surveys (September 2010 to April 2011) and invited to join us on those trips. Opportunities are rotated so all members get a chance to participate. If you are unable to join us (as you live out of state), you are allowed to give this membership to a person of your choosing (just let us know), or you may donate it to us and we will give it to a deserving student.

Door Prizes:

WDP grab bag of goodies: Minimum donation \$25

This will include items such as the WDP T-shirt, visor and more!



WDP apparel: Minimum donation \$25

Be at the height of fashion while supporting WDP with a Wild Dolphin Project polo shirt. We have both men's (left picture) and fitted women's (right picture) polos.



RSVP No Show Holiday Ball



RSVP/Raffle Ticket

Cut along the seam and send this page back with your donation!!

I am very excited to be able to support the Wild Dolphin Project while I enjoy spending time with my furry friends!

Please indicate the amount of your donation below

(The higher the donation, the more chances to win the above prizes!)

_____ \$_____ *I can enjoy just hanging around the house with my furry friends, relaxing, snoozing and being loved – hey, now that's the life!*

_____ \$500.00 *Allows me to go running with my dog, surely it will get rid of some of her energy?!*

_____ \$200.00 *Gives me the chance to continue training my cats to do tricks... maybe they will stop ignoring me this time.*

_____ \$100.00 *I can enjoy playing fetch with my dog... even if she doesn't actually bring the ball back to me!*

_____ \$50.00 *I can catch up on the latest cat gossip at the local hangout and nail sharpener – The Scratching Post.*

_____ \$25.00 *For once I don't have to use the line "I can't go, the goat ate my invitation, along with my homework and my shorts!"*

Good luck, and thank you for your generous donation; it is greatly appreciated, especially during this financially difficult time.

Name: _____

Address: _____

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*Return this form along with your check, payable to:
Wild Dolphin Project
P.O. Box 8436
Jupiter, FL 33468*

Note: Winners will be notified by phone/email in mid-January 2010. Grand prizes must be used in 2010; airfare to and from Grand Bahama Island and/or Florida is not included. No exchanges or monetary cash-outs allowed.

From all of us at the Wild Dolphin Project, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season!!

Other ways you can help:

In-Kind donations: *computers, monitors, cameras, servers, check our website for more ideas!*

Stock donations: *Contact myFi group with Solomon Smith Barney: 877-357-0888 to donate!*

Airline Miles donations: *Donate your unused airline miles to WDP; contact the office at 561-575-5660*

Matching Programs: *Find out if the company you work for will match your donation to WDP!*



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Please note: All monetary giving is based on a calendar year and is accrued throughout the year. The No Show Ball funding is carried over to the following year.

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Blue Water Graphics and Southeastern Printing, Don Mader, for production of the newsletters and additional printing/promotional needs for WDP; **Shaklee Corporation** for supplying WDP with their environment-friendly products for R/V *Stenella* and the research office.; Bruce Helander - framed print; Kathy Britton - original artwork

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IN THIS ISSUE

RELEASING A SPOTTED
DOLPHIN BACK INTO
THE WILD!

MEMBERS IN ACTION

UNKNOWN DOLPHINS
OFF THE SOUTHEAST
COAST OF FLORIDA

CETACEAN SIGHTERS

INTRODUCING TRISTAN

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

BULLETIN BOARD

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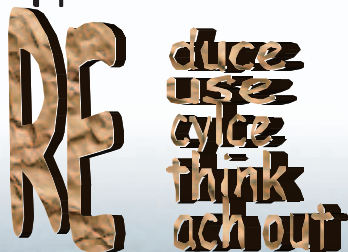
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*Research, Education, Conservation
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**All memberships are based on a calendar year.*

All monetary contributions are accumulated to your annual membership.

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Names only will be published in newsletter, annual reports, etc.
If you would like to be anonymous, please check here. ☐

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