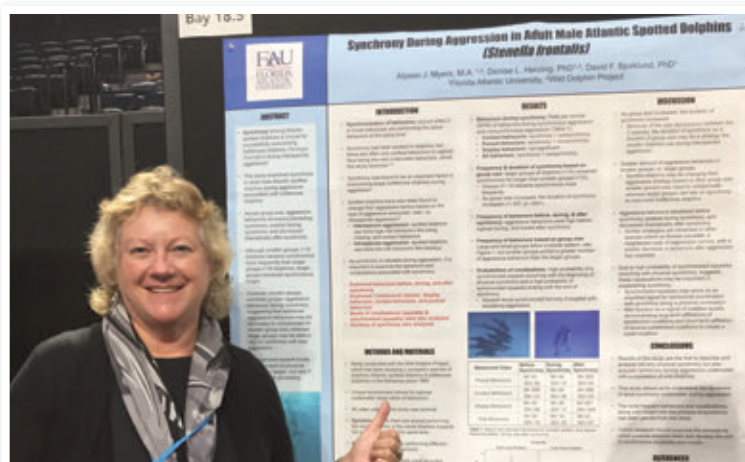




“In Their World...On Their Terms...”

PHOTO: BETHANY AUGIERE

## 2017 Society for Marine Mammalogy meeting in Halifax Nova Scotia in October



Dr. Herzing standing by PhD student Alyson Myers poster at SMM 2017

Every two years, scientists from around the world and across disciplines get together to share their findings and thoughts. This year's meeting was a harsh and critical reminder that the world's marine mammals are in trouble and face new challenges at accelerating rates.

In 2017, we witnessed more than 15 Atlantic right whales (*Eubaleana glacialis*) deaths due to a combination of ship strikes and fishing line entanglement. Right whales are an endangered species, and 16 deaths was a hard loss for this species. Driven to the brink by early whalers,

right whales have had a relatively successful comeback over recent decades. However, this year's extreme losses are a reminder that extinction can happen fast, and even though a species is recovering, they are easily driven to the brink by catastrophic events or climate change effects.

Two years ago, in San Francisco, the same society also met and applauded the efforts of the Mexican government and other stakeholders, for committing to the protection of the very endangered “vaquita” a small porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*) which lives only in the upper areas of the Gulf of California.

Driven to near extinction due to the illegal fishing of the “totoaba” for its swim bladder used in Chinese medicine, the effort was, in the end, corrupted and to date, fewer than 30 porpoise remain but perhaps even less. This fall a heroic effort to capture the last remaining vaquita is underway, in hopes of preserving the species. The US Navy and its trained dolphins are searching and identifying porpoise in the area in an effort to remove them for the future.

Unfortunately, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Some years ago, we actually lost the Yangtze River dolphin (*Lipotes vexillifer*) or “Baiji” due to habitat destruction and dams in China. The vaquita is likely next to disappear. And still there is a short list of other endangered dolphins and porpoises, most who live in restricted habitats and rivers around the world that are being impacted by ever-expanding human populations and technologies in their habitats. For most it's not too late, but it could be if we do nothing. It's a reminder that extinction can happen fast, and even with good intentions and resource commitments, events can overrun even the

best laid intentions.

Climate change, of course, is already impacting many environments and species, even our own community of Atlantic spotted dolphins in the Bahamas.

This fall WDP published a paper called “Exodus! Large-scale displacement and social adjustments of resident Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*) in the Bahamas. (Check our website [www.wilddolphinproject.org](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org) for a copy)

We documented the displacement of our previously resident dolphins in the Bahamas to other areas in the Bahamas. Likely due to a prey crash and possibly a larger climate issue. We continue to monitor the environment and our dolphin communities, even though they are currently spread between two study sites. We hope the dolphins can be flexible and continue to find new locations and food as needed. But for us, this may also be the tip of the iceberg. Often, by the time we notice something, it is well underway. Let's hope we wake up in time to save our natural world and work towards a healthy future for all species on the planet.

**Dr. Denise Herzing**  
Research Director, WDP

# ANOTHER FIELD SEASON IN THE BOOKS

It's early May and the Wild Dolphin Project crew is on board the Research Vessel Stenella, for our first trip of the season. We're all anxiously awaiting for the first spotted dolphin encounter as we cruise around our study site. Then we hear it — stomping. Someone on watch has glimpsed dolphins, but the question is, are they spotted or bottlenose? Everybody inside eagerly makes their way to the front of the boat. Sure enough, a group of spotted dolphins are riding the bow, with their dorsal fins slicing through the surface.



PHOTO: BETHANY AUGIERE

Bethany Augiere  
Denise Herzing, our research director and founder, peers into the water and immediately recognizes Summer and Naia, each with their calves, Spring and Nala.

We slip into the water with cameras and hydrophones to see who is in the group, and record their behavior and vocalizations. We saw familiar individuals, like the juvenile

female Tristan and another female, Flambe with her new calf Flame.

This past summer was the Wild Dolphin Project's 33rd consecutive season in the field studying the dolphins of the Bahamas. Our trips were filled with guests, research assistants, graduate students, interns, colleagues and reporters, from all over the world. As the season progressed, we continued with our two-way work, and also experimented with new research toys, like drones, which could prove very useful in the future.

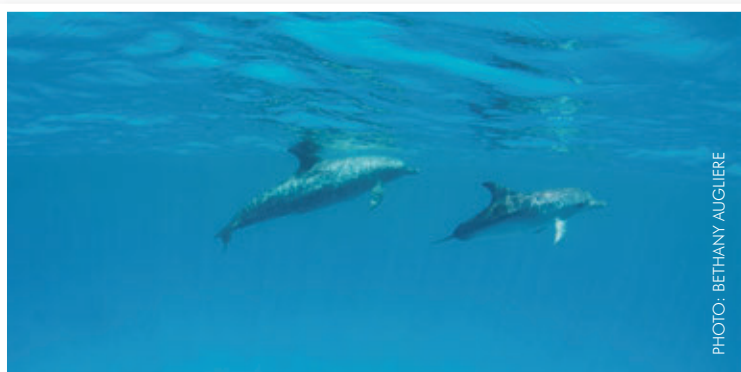


PHOTO: BETHANY AUGIERE

Naia and Nala, a new female calf of the season



PHOTO: WILD DOLPHIN PROJECT

Long term spotted dolphin, Nassau, with her 2016 calf, Nautica.

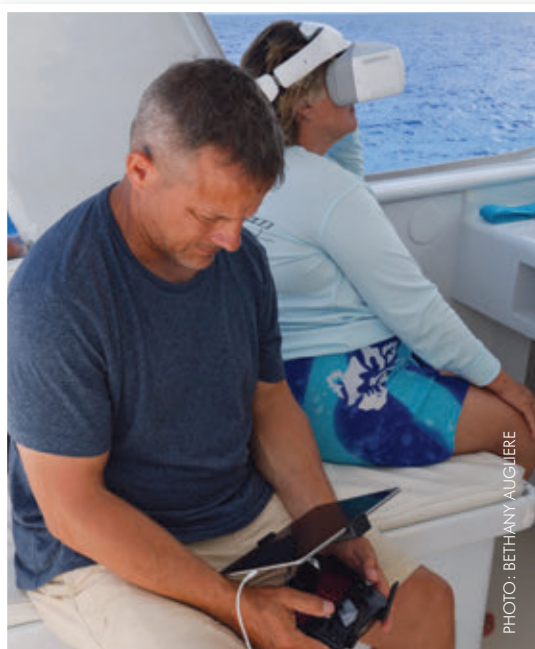


PHOTO: BETHANY AUGIERE

Matthias controls the drone while Dr. Herzing watches the habitat go by in real time with the help of a virtual reality mask.

## 2018 FIELD SEASON

### PREPARING FOR 2018



PHOTO: BETHANY AUGIERE

Although our 2017 field season has come to a conclusion, we are already planning and preparing for 2018, which will be our 34th consecutive year in the field. The upcoming

summer schedule is finalized in December and announced first exclusively to members via email. One of the perks of maintaining a membership with WDP is first opportunity to

sign up for the trips. Then about 4-6 weeks afterwards (mid to late January) we will email our inquiry list, update our website with the remaining spots, and announce trip availability on social media. Please email [fieldwork@wilddolphinproject.org](mailto:fieldwork@wilddolphinproject.org) to be added to the inquiry list or consider purchasing a membership. Visit our online store to purchase your membership today! We are looking forward to continuing our work studying and observing dolphins in the wild.



In 2013, about 50 percent of our Grand Bahama study population moved down to Bimini. So, for the past four seasons, we have split our field time surveying off Grand Bahama Island and Bimini; this year was no different. Most of the time, we'd spend a few days off Grand Bahama Island at the beginning of the trip before heading down to Bimini.

Unfortunately, we only saw about 20 percent of the population that live off Grand Bahama Island. Most of those remaining animals are from the southern cluster, comprised of about 35 animals, which have typically been a challenge to find. Regardless, we are wondering where they are.

Overall, we encountered

about 52 percent of our total population, between the two islands. We saw familiar individuals like Nassau and her offspring, including Nautica, Nautilus and Nereide. We even saw BigGash, who is estimated to be in his 50s and one of the oldest animals in our population. Denise first saw BigGash as a mature adult back in 1985. We know from genetic work he has sired many calves too! And our first fourth generation calf, Bueno, is still around with his mom Burgundy. Burgundy is from the Paint family. Paint had Brush, Brush had Burgundy, and in 2016, Burgundy had Bueno. We're happy to see he survived his first year. We documented 12 newly pregnant females, which

could mean we will have a lot of new calves in 2018. We also recorded nine new calves, but three of those were possibly calves from last year. That is something we will clarify this winter with our video and photos.

This summer we were joined by long-term WDP colleague, Matthias Hoffmann-Kuhnt, from the National University of Singapore. Matthias brought his drone, and we used it a few times to follow traveling groups when we couldn't get in the water. We were especially impressed with how well we could see the animals during low-light conditions. It's possible we will use drones for future research projects.

Erik Olsen, a reporter from

the digital news outlet Quartz, joined us for a trip this season and also brought his drone. Erik has been out with us before, and wrote a piece on our communication work for the New York Times. In October, he published a video about our two-way research, featuring lots of stunning aerial and underwater footage.

In early September, we arrived back to Florida from our final trip of the season—just in time to start preparing for Hurricane Irma. We never did see Summer or Naia again after that first trip, but we're hoping to see them again next year. Maybe Spring and Nala, their calves, will have some spots coming in.

**Bethany Augliere**  
Research Associate, WDP

## INTERN IN THE FIELD

### LIAH MCPHERSON



Liah McPherson

**F**or me, it's always been dolphins. I've wanted to study their behavior and intelligence for as long as I can remember. Naturally, when I read Dr. Denise Herzing's *Dolphin Diaries* in 2014, I knew I

wanted to intern with the Wild Dolphin Project. That May, I got to spend my first ten days aboard the RV *Stenella* and immediately felt I was in the right place. Yet, even after a second internship in 2015, I could have never guessed

that I'd be spending the entire summer of 2017 on *Stenella* as a field assistant. Being invited back as part of the crew this season ranks high on the list of best things that have ever happened to me.

As it happened, my first trip of the season was also the busiest of the season! I was thrown into the deep end of field research—most days we had three or four long dolphin encounters, and I spent many hours in the water learning how to record dolphin behavior and vocalizations. The real challenge was going through photos in the evening and learning how to identify all the dolphins.

Now that the field season is over, I can identify most of the 89 dolphins I came across in real time. This is largely because a project of mine for the summer was to create a body parts catalog for all of these dolphins! Each dolphin has distinct fins, coloration

and body scars. With the body parts catalog I created, we should be able to identify dolphins more quickly based on these features. Next summer, I'm looking forward to taking on another, bigger project with the Wild Dolphin Project that I can use for my Bachelor's honors thesis at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where I attend college.

**L**earning from Dr. Herzing and her colleagues during the 2017 field season was somehow even more incredible than I knew it would be—I'm already eagerly anticipating next May. Not a day goes by that I don't dream of crossing the Gulf Stream aboard *Stenella* to explore the lives of wild dolphins.

**Liah McPherson**

## CAPTAIN'S CORNER - OCTOBER 2017



Captain Brad Ruda

Hey everybody! First off I would like to thank all the amazing passengers and colleagues who joined us this 2017 field season. Also, thank you to every member of the WDP crew and staff... we couldn't do it without you.

What a year it's been for *R/V Stenella*. This year prior to the

field season *Stenella* went for a haul-out and got scraped and cleaned from front to back, fresh new lettering and "RESEARCH" written along the side, and beautiful new bottom paint.

Before we knew what hit us the field season was in full swing, and what a field season it was. We had incredible encounters, once in a life time experiences for some of our new passengers this year, and great quality time with the dolphins for our research colleagues. We also experienced sharks and foul weather and mechanical

difficulties but WDP always has, and always will, prevail.

"Irma" is a name everyone is familiar with now. At one point it was the second strongest hurricane in recorded history, and in September she was coming right for us. *Stenella* was moved to a hurricane safe marina and was tied and buttoned up tight. With lots of luck and preparation, she weathered the most powerful storm in recent memory. Breaking only a few welds along our railing, she survived. We now belong to a hurricane club that allows us to haul her out of the water

in the event that we are in the path of yet another hurricane.

I want to give special thanks to Denise and Melissa and many others – you're my support team and I couldn't have done it without you. This 2017 season is one I'll remember for the rest of my life and we had some incredible moments that I'll never forget. Thank you everyone who joined us this year and I am looking forward to 2018 already!

Sunny days and smooth seas,

**Captain Brad Ruda**  
Captain *R/V Stenella*,  
Wild Dolphin Project



After Haul Out



New Lettering for RV *Stenella*



~ **SAVE the DATE** ~


1st Annual Event

**Wild Ocean Science**

Join us for an evening of conservation and education to help continue to research and protect the beauty and the lives of the wild Atlantic Spotted Dolphins

**MARCH 24, 2018 5-8PM**

FAU campus auditorium :: 5353 Parkside Drive, Jupiter FL 33454



Atlantic Spotted Dolphin, *Stenella frontalis*  
Photo Credit: Tanya G. Burnett

Premiere of South Florida PBS' **Changing Seas** episode  
**Dolphins: Breaking the Code**

Special guest host **Miles O'Brien**  
(<https://www.mobprod.com/>)

Photo Ops and Book signing with  
**Dr. Denise Herzing** / Research Director and Founder  
of The Wild Dolphin Project a nonprofit organization

For advanced ticket sales and info please visit  
<http://www.wilddolphinproject.org/media/events>

**The Wild Dolphin PROJECT**  
In Their World. On Their Terms.

## FIRST ANNUAL EVENT

# WILD OCEAN SCIENCE

We are excited to announce our first annual event set to take place in March 2018. This event will be the first of many to come and will highlight the sciences of the wild ocean. The Wild Dolphin Project's scientific research will be featured in an episode of *Changing Seas*, a marine science series focused on ocean issues and exploration. Currently in its 10th season, the series goes to sea with scientists, giving viewers a first-hand look at how oceanographers and other experts study earth's last frontier. The evening will kick off with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, a

meet-n-greet with WDP staff & crew, and exclusive raffle prizes. A Q&A session will follow along with an opportunity to purchase merchandise. Dr. Herzing will be available for photo ops and book signing. Miles O'Brien, an independent American broadcast news journalist specializing in science, technology, and aerospace, is the special guest host and master of ceremonies. Stay tuned to our social media sites and event page [www.wilddolphinproject.org/media/events/](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org/media/events/) for more event details and to purchase tickets. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please email [Melissa@WildDolphinProject.org](mailto:Melissa@WildDolphinProject.org) for details.



# WDP HOLIDAY GIFT SETS

WDP Gift Sets are available this holiday season. Chock-full of WDP merchandise and gear, these gift sets are sure to please any lover of wild dolphins. From t-shirts to sunshirts to a decorative

metal photo, every gift set includes extra WDP gear such as a Dr. Herzing's book, "The Wild Dolphin Project: Long-term Research of Atlantic Spotted Dolphins in the Bahamas", a DVD which

explores the history of the project and the depth of our research, a WDP mousepad and postcards to show others you support our project, and lastly, a personalized holiday card signed by our staff and

crew. Give this gracious gift to someone you love this holiday season or as a gift to yourself. Quantities are limited so order today while supplies last!



There's more! Visit our online store for all WDP gift sets. Go to [www.wilddolphinproject.org](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org) and click "STORE" at the top of the page.

## Let's **GO GREEN** for a better OCEAN SCENE

On Trip 9 we decided to snorkel on a large floating mat of seaweed. We were hoping to find fish or baby sea turtles. But, what did we find?

### Trash.

With everything impacting our planet today from overfishing, climate change and pollution to habitat loss, we know it can feel overwhelming. But there are simple steps people can take in their daily lives that help the environment and wildlife, such as reducing our use of single-use plastic, like plastic bags, straws and water bottles.

Plastic is so prevalent in our oceans now that researchers think plastic pollution in the ocean could outweigh fish in the ocean by 2050. It's even in our sea salt! A recent study says that Americans could be ingesting up to 660 particles of plastic each year if they eat 2.3 grams of salt daily.

### Bethany Augliere

P.S. You can read more blogs post from the field season here: [www.wilddolphinproject.org/media/blog](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org/media/blog)



### YES! EMAIL MY NEXT NEWSLETTER

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Yes! Enter my email into a drawing for a WDP sunshirt!

My size is \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to WDP or simply email [info@wilddolphinproject.org](mailto:info@wilddolphinproject.org) with your name, address, and size.

The solar Performance Long Sleeve offers superior sun protection and performance qualities. Featuring up to UPF +50 solar protection, the Solar Performance Long Sleeve is lightweight, comfortable, and sure to keep the sun's rays from penetrating through to your skin. This fabric is powered by PURE-tech™ moisture wicking technology.

Opt to **GO GREEN** and enter a chance to win a free WDP sunshirt



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**Buy & Sell on Ebay** – Wild Dolphin Project is part of the eBay Giving Works program. You can support our mission when you buy and sell on eBay.

**Paypal Giving** – Its easy to donate using your Paypal account. As a BONUS you can set up automatic recurring donations to make it easy to give effortlessly! Set it all up in PayPal!

**Workplace Giving** – The Wild Dolphin Project is a member of **EarthShare!** Business

owners: Please visit the EarthShare site, and select Workplace Giving to register your company with EarthShare and designate Wild Dolphin Project as a recipient.

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**Wishlist** – WDP is continually seeking better equipment, faster technology, and upgrades to boat equipment. If you would like to make an in-kind donation you can view our wishlist online at [www.wilddolphinproject.org/donate/wish-list](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org/donate/wish-list).

**Merchandise** – All proceeds from WDP t-shirts, books, gift sets and other merchandise help fund our research by providing more time in the field. We thank you for your purchases and supporting our mission to study the free-ranging Atlantic spotted dolphins . . . In their World . . . On their Terms . . .

# Memberships

All members receive a WDP Book (signed on request) and first notifications for summer field trip sign-up.

**NEONATE** – \$35 - WDP Book

**TWO TONE** – \$75 - WDP Book & T-shirt

**SPECKLED** – \$250 - WDP Book & T-shirt, invites for Florida work day trips

**MOTTLED** – \$500 - WDP Book & T-shirt, invites for Florida research trips, meet and greet with project updates

**FUSED** – \$1,000-WDP Book & T-shirt, invites for Florida research day trips, meet and greet with project updates, intracoastal day trip on R/V Stenella

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## Website:

[www.WildDolphinProject.org](http://www.WildDolphinProject.org)

## General Email:

[info@wilddolphinproject.org](mailto:info@wilddolphinproject.org)

## Trip Information Email:

[fieldwork@wilddolphinproject.org](mailto:fieldwork@wilddolphinproject.org)

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- ☐ \$250 ..... Speckled membership
- ☐ \$500 ..... Mottled membership
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- ☐ \$2,500 ..... Steward membership
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## 2018 Corporate Membership

You can also become a member online! Visit [www.wilddolphinproject.org](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org) and click on "Donate/Support WDP" to sign up as a new/renewing member.

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- be recognized on WDP's website (company logo and website link included for top sponsor only)

## Contact Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone/Ext: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### METHOD OF PAYMENT:

- ☐ Check (made out payable to the Wild Dolphin Project)

Credit Card: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ American Express

### CREDIT CARD INFORMATION:

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
CW Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code: (associated w/ credit card) \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP AUTO-RENEWAL:

- ☐ Check here if you would like us to automatically renew your checked membership level each year.
- By checking above, you are allowing us to charge your credit card on file for renewing your membership each year and will provide updated card information should it change.
- If you would like to increase your membership level in the future, please notify us before your membership renewal by emailing [info@wilddolphinproject.org](mailto:info@wilddolphinproject.org).

Donors (names only) will be published in our newsletters, annual reports, etc. If you would like your donation to remain anonymous, please check here: ☐

You can also become a member online! Visit [www.wilddolphinproject.org](http://www.wilddolphinproject.org) and click on "Become a Member / Donate Today" to sign up as a new/renewing member.

Please make checks payable to **The Wild Dolphin Project** and send with this form to P.O. Box 8436, Jupiter, Florida 33468. All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.