

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# **WILD DOLPHIN PROJECT**

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EIN 65-0264660



PREPARED BY:  
MELISSA INFANTE

## MISSION

The Wild Dolphin Project is a scientific research organization that studies and reports on a specific pod of free-ranging Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*). Objectives of this long-term, non-invasive field research are to gather information on the natural history of these dolphins, including behaviors, social structure, communication, and habitat; and to report what we have learned to the scientific community and the general public.

## VISION

To observe, document and report the natural, underwater, social lives of wild dolphins, by creating a model of work that gives appropriateness to how the research is completed, non-invasively along with the quality of documented data. WDP seeks to contribute informed knowledge to help create awareness and preserve the natural environment through appreciation of all the biodiversity on our planet; ultimately promoting an educated and informed constituency who can vote and voice their concerns about policy and action-based decisions regarding our native world.

## STRATEGIES & PRINCIPLES

- Non-invasive research builds a trust between the research team and dolphin pod, which allows data to be captured in the most natural setting.
- Underwater observation provides an inclusive approach to analyze behavior, genetics, associations, cognition, and geography; along with, a reliable photo-identification tracking system.
- Preserving the natural environment gives long-term viability to all life-forms. Education provides a tool in which all can make informed decisions and appropriate actions.
- "IN THEIR WORLD, ON THEIR TERMS"



© Wild Dolphin Project  
Liah McPherson

# LETTER FROM THE RESEARCH DIRECTOR



RESEARCH DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER,  
DR. DENISE HERZING

2020 was a challenge in numerous ways, both personally and professionally. As we approached our 36th consecutive season in the Bahamas, we knew it would be a juggle. Much of what we do during our field work is really gathering yearly baseline information on life history data including pregnancies, new calves, health status, and relationships. In early July the Bahamas finally opened up its borders and we did manage to get out for two field trips until the Bahamas closed its borders once more due to COVID. Never in the history of WDP have we had less than 70 summer field days. That's really the minimum amount of time we need to observe our resident dolphins and document their status. Here are some things that will suffer from lack of data:

•Pregnancies and calving success: Although we don't always see every female that was pregnant in the previous year, we were especially excited to have over a dozen females in our group pregnant in 2019. Spotted dolphins are visually pregnant at about 5-6 months, so we often know who to expect to see with a new calf the following season. If we don't see a calf the following year, it is sometimes hard to tell if the female had a calf and lost it, or did not come to term. Females can go immediately into estrus and get pregnant quickly if they lose a calf, so it's tricky to calculate sometimes.

Social Associations: Because of the continuing displacement of our LBB resident dolphins to GBB, we are carefully monitoring their integration, or lack thereof. A bit of a natural experiment, documenting the emigration and immigration process is unique in our field site and will lend itself to insights yet to be understood.

Health: Every year we monitor the state of health of each individual dolphin. Are they skinny? Do they have any skin diseases or other problems? Given the health of the oceans these are serious factors to monitor. We also take note of the health of the habitat including coral bleaching and sea grass die offs. Given the large displacement of resident dolphins over the last 5 years, we worry that some of these shifts are permanent, leaving the dolphins to struggle for their food. Dolphins too are susceptible to viruses, including the morbillivirus that has taken hold at various times in the last decade and wiped out small communities of dolphins around the globe.

As the seas heat up, and as pollution and climate change continues to weaken the health of the oceans, we can continue to expect more whales stranding, more algae blooms, more red tide, more melting ice caps and more hurricanes. Nature is shouting at us, but are we listening? The health of the planet is intertwined with our own health. If we don't come to realize this soon, we will be our own undoing. But there are many groups and individuals working very hard, around the globe, both with local communities and governments to call attention and action to this issue. Please make your voice heard to policy makers both locally and nationally. Think Global, Act Local.

## NEW TECHNOLOGY

Dolphins live and move around in a liquid 360° environment so in 2019 we started using 360° underwater cameras to capture *all* of the dolphins and *all* of their behaviors within visual range at once. We had several different mounts developed for two of the next generation 360° video cameras in their underwater housings.

Dr. Herzing had a special request for a mount that would “hang” in the water column so that when a cameraperson released it at around 20’ it could record the dolphins from mid-water, capturing them in their 360° world. That means the whole apparatus, i.e. camera, housing, and mount, had to be designed with variable ballast to achieve neutral buoyancy anywhere within a depth of 15’ to 30’ of seawater. The designer calls it DriftCam360©. The rock-solid stable footage that it captures of all the dolphins, all their behavior, and environment is nothing less than stunning from a research and esthetic perspective! The researcher watching the video can zoom-out and observe the overall dynamics of the whole pod, then zoom-in and track the behavior of one dolphin or a group of dolphins. With 360° underwater cameras we’re able to see, analyze, and document more of the dolphin’s lives than ever before!



PHOTO: AXEL STEPAN

DRIFTCAM360© ALLOWS RESEARCHERS TO CAPTURE ALL OF THE DOLPHIN'S BEHAVIOR AT ONCE AND REVIEW IT LATER FOR ANALYSIS

DriftCam360 © 2018 Drew Mayer



# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



AXEL STEPAN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, PRESIDENT

It is my privilege to continue to serve as President of The Wild Dolphin Project's Board of Directors and to enjoy a front row seat as Dr. Herzing and her team break new ground in the study of Atlantic spotted dolphins "In Their World, On Their Terms."

During 2020, however, we were not exempt from significant setbacks many businesses, individuals, and non-profits experienced as a result of COVID-19. Although our work is done in the wild, we are in Bahamian waters and fall under the jurisdiction of the Bahamian government while we are there. The Bahamas closed to all non-essential visitors and consequently our field season was reduced from the usual nine trips to only two. Unfortunately, this put some of our most exciting projects on hold.

After several challenging years, continuous improvements and extensive testing of each new iteration, the underwater wearable computer we call Cetacean Hearing Augmentation Telemetry (C.H.A.T.) was finally ready to go for the 2020 field season. This device will allow us to make further strides into the complex world of dolphin communication. We will continue to test and improve the device in the off-season and will be ready to put it into action in the 2021 field season. I continue to be excited to see what insights we will be able to gain through the use of this new technology in 2021 and beyond.

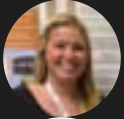
Similarly, Ecological Acoustic Recorders (E.A.R.s) were a new tool first deployed during the 2018 field season. These devices, deployed in our study area, allow us to listen 24/7 and learn about the acoustics of the dolphins that are resident to that area. The 2018 & 2019 deployments yielded terrific results and we look forward to increasing the number of devices and consequently the coverage area in 2021.

It wasn't all bad news in 2020! The extended downtime allowed us to make some much-needed improvements to our most valuable tool: R/V Stenella. We upgraded some of her most vital systems, navigation equipment, and some of the comforts that make life at sea possible for the team. We look forward to continued advancements in our research through technology and the commitment of our team in 2021.

## OUR TEAM



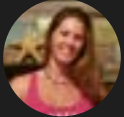
Research Director, Dr. Denise Herzing



Research Assistant, Cassie Rusche



Captain, Brad Ruda



Executive Assistant, Melissa Infante

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Axel Stepan, President
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PHOTO: BETHANY AUGLIERE

COURTSHIP BEHAVIOR BY A GROUP OF ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHINS OBSERVED IN THE 2020 FIELD SEASON



A PREGNANT ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHIN IN THE MOTTLED AGE CLASS OBSERVED IN THE 2020 FIELD SEASON



## 2020 FIELD SEASON

During the 2020 field season we were able to get in three research trips to The Bahamas. We had two trips in July and one in late November. Usually we have nine research trips that allow us ample time to see most of the population that we study. However this year, we only saw 15% of Little Bahama Bank (LBB) Atlantic spotted dolphin population. The entire 15% were ones that had relocated down to Great Bahama Bank (GBB), therefore we did not see a single spotted dolphin up on LBB. But with our reduced field time we only had a few days up on LBB, and the remaining LBB dolphins are already difficult to find. We did discover, however, that three new LBB dolphins had moved down to GBB. This indicated to us that the spotted dolphins were still moving around the sand banks. We are wondering if any other dolphins made the move from LBB to GBB, and we hope to find out during the 2021 field season.

In regards to our GBB population, we saw about 67% of these dolphins. The GBB population also had three new calves, two males and one female. We started monitoring the GBB population back in 2013. Based on our data, two of the females who had calves this year were first time mothers and for the third female this is her second calf. We also saw two GBB individuals that we haven't seen since 2016! Back in 2016 these two were in the speckled age class and now, when observed in 2020, they were in the mottled age class. Take a look at the pictures below of Emerald in 2016 and then in 2020, look at how many spots she gained in 5 years! As is known with Atlantic spotted dolphins, they gain spots with age. This is why it is important for us to try and see every individual of the population during each field season. We need to track their spot patterns so that we don't lose these individuals over time.

In regards to behavior, we had a little bit of everything. We observed aggression, interspecific aggression with the bottlenose dolphins, courtship, play, and foraging (take a look at our blogs from this summer for more information about the behavioral encounters). During the last trip in November, we also saw three very pregnant females who looked like they were ready to pop any day!

Even though our field season was cut short we saw new calves, pregnant females, behaviorally rich encounters, and some individuals we haven't seen in a few years. Overall, not a bad shortened summer field season.

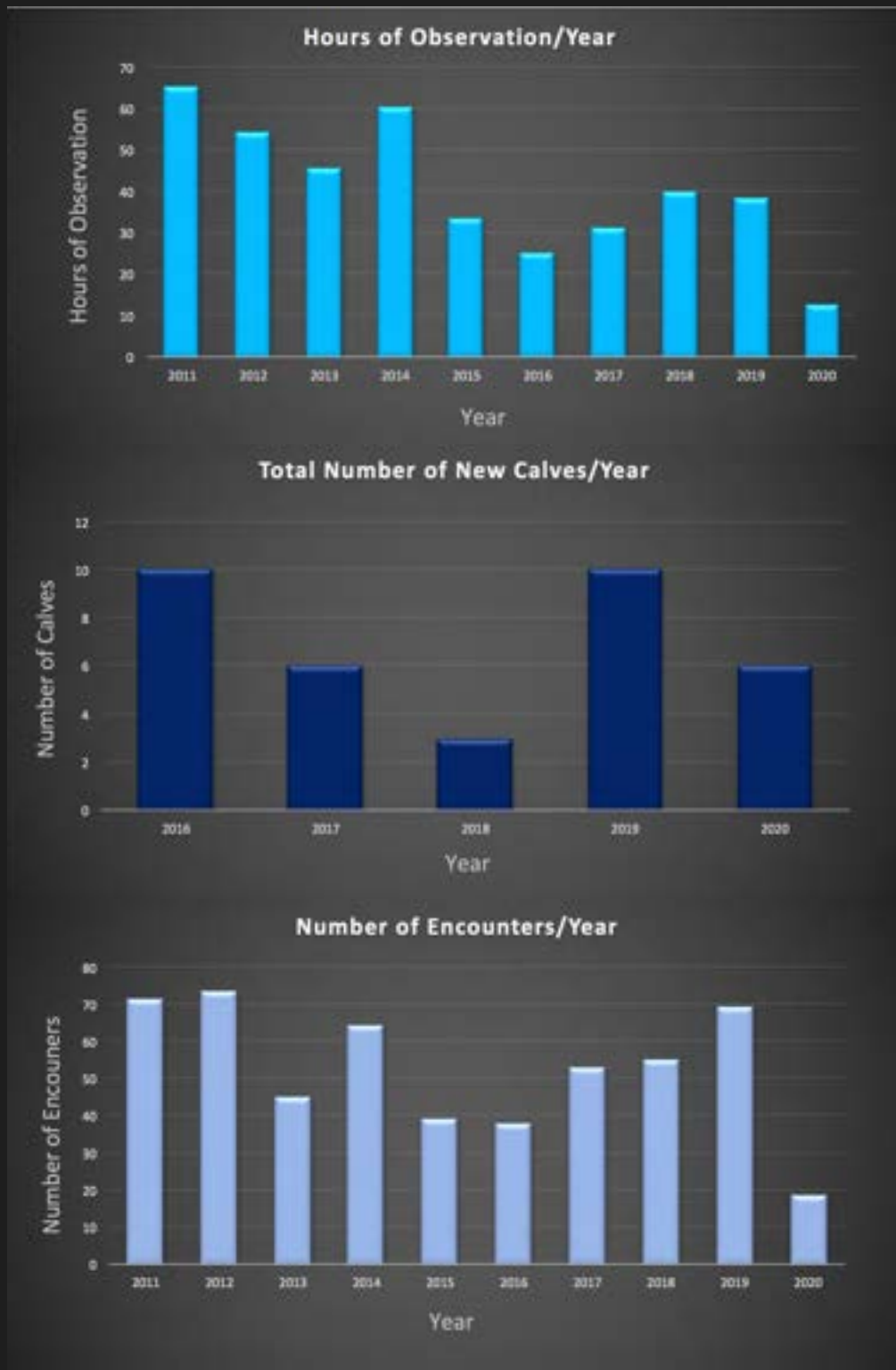


EMERALD IN 2016



EMERALD IN 2020

## DATA OVERVIEW





YOUNG MALE ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHINS OBSERVED IN THE 2020 FIELD SEASON  
PERHAPS THE START OF A YOUNG MALE COALITION



A FEMALE ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHIN IN THE FUSED AGE CLASS  
AND HER NEW CALF OBSERVED IN THE 2020 FIELD SEASON

# FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Anonymous Foundations  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Charity for Change  
Earthshare  
Focused On Nature  
Fruehauf Family Foundation  
Kuebler Family Foundation  
MAH Foundation  
Pacific Life Foundation  
The Donald Slavik Family  
Foundation  
The Henry Foundation  
The Rorer Foundation  
Templeton World Charity  
Foundation  
Yourcause

# CORPORATE SUPPORT

Art Instinct by Hollie Berry  
Southeastern Printing  
Roger Brown



A YOUNG FEMALE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN PLAYING WITH A  
PIECE OF CORAL OBSERVED DURING THE 2020 FIELD SEASON



# MEMBER SUPPORT

## CHAT Society Members

Suzanne Johnson

## Ambassador Members

Nic Mader

Ruth Petzold

## Fused Members

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Lisa Fast

Mr. & Mrs. Fruehauf

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Drew Mayer

Stephanie Pew

Kathy Reynolds

Deborah Rybak

David Schlessinger & Kiki Hahn

Chris & Gale Traugher

Margery Ziff & Al Snapp

## Mottled Members

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Diane & Seth Davidson

Garbose Family

Howard Green, M.D.

Diane Ross

Carl Safina

David Waller

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April Clark

Elizabeth Flynn

Garbose Family

Amy Greenblatt

Laura Kerr

Eleanor Kneibler

Miriam Lippman

Kelly McMahon

Jay & Gail Nelson

Mirela O'Sullivan

Terri Roberts

Gary Russo

Peter C. Sugarman

Keith Twitchell

Gini Kopecky Wallace



TWO JUVENILE ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHINS IN THE SPECKLED AGE CLASS OBSERVED IN 2020. THE BUBBLE TRAIL INDICATING A VOCALIZATION



# MEMBER SUPPORT

## Neonate Members

William Beecham  
Tom Bunzel  
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Ryder Cone  
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Shannon Conklin  
David Evans  
Meg Fotakis  
Eystein Fredrik  
Nancy Gear  
Jane Gerard  
Frank Glover  
Liam Groth  
Emily Hill  
Tim Kane  
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Rachel Pryke  
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Marilyn Samwick  
William Savino  
Isabel Severino  
Chris Shank  
Lydia Shaw  
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Joan Silaco  
Frances South  
Marija Spokaite  
Cathy Thomas  
Kai Vignone  
Wenni Wang  
James Whittington

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Ryan Flatt  
Amanda Frazier  
Grass River Garden Club  
Genevieve Hartman  
Haworth Family  
Sara Hinckley  
Virginie Ismail  
Emma Mauger  
Jill Pando  
Steven Pedersen  
Kimberly Randal  
Steven D. Rubin  
Audrey Schulman  
Kenneth & Ellen Slater  
Sam & Jessica Slater  
Jacqueline & Simon Whitten  
Kimberly & Samantha Wicknertz  
Lisa Usdan  
Kasha Winston



A FEMALE ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHIN  
AND HER NEW CALF OBSERVED DURING  
THE 2020 FIELD SEASON



©Wild Dolphin Project  
Photo: Liah McPherson

## FLORIDA KEYS CHARTER

2020 has turned out to be a very challenging year for all of us. Normally, the WDP field season begins in early May. Like the rest of the country, our schedule was interrupted and then adjusted due to the COVID pandemic. As both the US and the Bahamas remained in lockdown, we cancelled two trips set to start in May. Since the Bahamas remained closed into early June, we decided to do a field trip within the US. The Florida Keys had just opened up to land visitors and we were clear to boat down to the Keys as well. With our long-term Board member Ruth Petzold and her guests onboard, we motored down to the Florida Keys. Weather was still a bit vicious in early June so it took us a couple days to even get to the upper Keys, due to local and intense lightning storms. But, finally arriving off Key Largo we were glad we made it. The reefs along the Keys, especially the protected National Marine Sanctuary, are still in good shape. Over the days we explored various reefs, both inshore and near the offshore edge, including Molasses Reef, Grecian Reef, and of course the famous underwater Christ of the Abyss statue. Green turtles often came to the reef right before sunset to hang out, allowing us a glimpse of their underwater life. Everyone onboard seems glad to just be out doing something, after our long stretch of lockdown at home. And what better place to hang out then on a boat in the Florida Keys. We look forward to exploring this area more in the future, both to enjoy the natural wonders, but also to look for dolphins and do our Florida identification work.







PHOTOS FROM THE FLORIDA KEYS CHARTER TRIP IN 2020

# EXPANDING IN FLORIDA

We study the dolphins at our longterm study site in the Bahamas during the summer months. That's when weather and working conditions are best. During winter, our boat gets hauled out for a tune-up, while we analyze data to publish our scientific results, present at scientific conferences, give talks to the public and get ready for the next season!

In 2009, we started fieldwork in Florida over the fall and winter months to begin studying dolphins off the South Florida coast, as little is known about them. As we could, we would head out and survey along the coast to find either spotted or bottlenose dolphins. Yet, between boat maintenance, weather and everyone's schedules, finding time for surveys was a challenge. Now, we're ramping up that work again and we can rely on citizen scientists to help us collect data.

Most of the work on dolphins in Florida is on bottlenose dolphins in the Sarasota Bay region, as well as in the Florida Keys, Florida Bay and Indian River Lagoon. With little known about the coastal populations, we want to document and monitor their abundance, distribution and residency patterns. We're also curious if any Atlantic spotted dolphins cross the Gulf Stream from the Bahamas to Florida waters. This is why tracking individuals is important. So far we have never seen an individual in both areas. However, we do know they have traveled across deep water between islands in the Bahamas.

## Florida Fieldwork

Our work in Florida is a little different than in the Bahamas, since it does not require us living out at sea. Typically, we leave the dock around 8 or 9 am on our 62ft power catamaran (R/V Stenella) and survey our permit area until at least 3 pm. We conduct surveys along the intracoastal and also out in the ocean close to shore and in deep water.

During our surveys, we always have someone on "Dolphin Watch" to scan for dolphins. We record environmental information every half hour. This environmental information includes our location, water temperature, sea state, wind direction, wave height, and cloud cover. If we spot dolphins we mark the time, location, water depth, and what species we saw. Then we take photo ID shots from the surface of the dolphins' dorsal fins, which we are legally allowed to do with our NOAA Fisheries permit.

After the day out on the water, our research assistant Cassie Rusche make copies of our data sheets and puts the photos onto the computer to be analyzed.



*Photo taken under NMFS permit, ©Wild Dolphin Project*



# FLUKEBOOKS

Since 1985, we have been studying two resident dolphin species in the northern Bahamas: Atlantic spotted dolphins (*Stenella frontalis*) & Atlantic bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). In 2013, about half of our spotted dolphin community left the waters off Grand Bahama Island and moved down to Bimini.

Since then it has been very hard to find the remaining spotted dolphins off Grand Bahama Island. We have been using new technology to help us find them but we are also exploring new avenues for help. While exploring new avenues, we found and teamed up with Flukebook. This platform allows citizens to participate in science by uploading the photos they have taken of animals to see if that animal is in the researcher's catalog.

This is where you come in. We know dive boats and personal boats frequent these waters. If you happen to see dolphins and get photos we would appreciate it if you could submit them to us through our Flukebook account. Wildbooks (the creators of Flukebook) is a company that uses citizen scientists to help researchers identify individuals, the more eyes out there the better. Our main study sites are off of Grand Bahama Island and Bimini, however if you have photos from anywhere in the Bahamas (Berry Islands, Cay Sal, etc..) or even older photos from a few years back, please send those in as well! It's a big ocean out there and sometimes we don't see some individuals for a few years. We don't know why we see them some years and not others. They could be traveling farther south than we usually survey, and you might be in just the right area at the right time. Dorsal fin shots are a huge help as well! So even if you only have shots from the surface, please send those in. We appreciate your help and we look forward to seeing your photos!

[illegible]

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## March 2020

On Saturday, March 7, 2020 WDP attended NatureScaping, an outdoor estival, at John D. MackArthur Beach State Park. The purpose of this event was to promote environmental education, support the planting of native species, highlight outdoor activities at the park and provide a good time for visitors of all ages. This fun event features native plant sales, food trucks, children's crafts, live animal shows, presentations, obstacle courses, door prizes and more.

## February 2020

On Saturday, February 29, 2020 a local gym, [Hard Exercise Works](#) in Boca Raton, Florida teamed up with WDP Research Assistant Cassie Rusche and WDP Admin Melissa Williams for a workout for charity called "Deadlift for Dolphins". These athlete Hew-mans enjoyed a brief overview of WDP and had a chance to scoop up merch after the workout.

## January 2020

On Friday, January 31, 2020 Research Director and Founder, Dr. Denise Herzing presented "Dolphins in the Wild: Cracking the Code" to a packed house at the Lyric Theatre in Stuart, Florida. This was a free event thanks to The [Environmental Studies Council](#).

## January 2020

On Wednesday, January 29, 2020 Research Assistant, Cassie Volker presented the work of WDP for the "Who's New" ladies group.

## January 2020

On Thursday, January 16, 2020, WDP attended the premier of the [H2O Trickle Down Exhibition](#) at the [Lighthouse Art Center](#) in Tequesta, Florida, which featured art and photography from [Ruth Petzold Photography](#), [Tom Fitz](#), and more. Dr. Denise Herzing presented an overview of WDP for approximately 100 guests. If you missed joining us that evening, be sure to stop in to view the exhibit which will be displayed until February 12th.



Melissa Williams and Cassie Volker thank HEWI



Nic Mader and Dr. Denise Herzing



Dr. Denise Herzing presents an overview of WDP to guests at the art show.



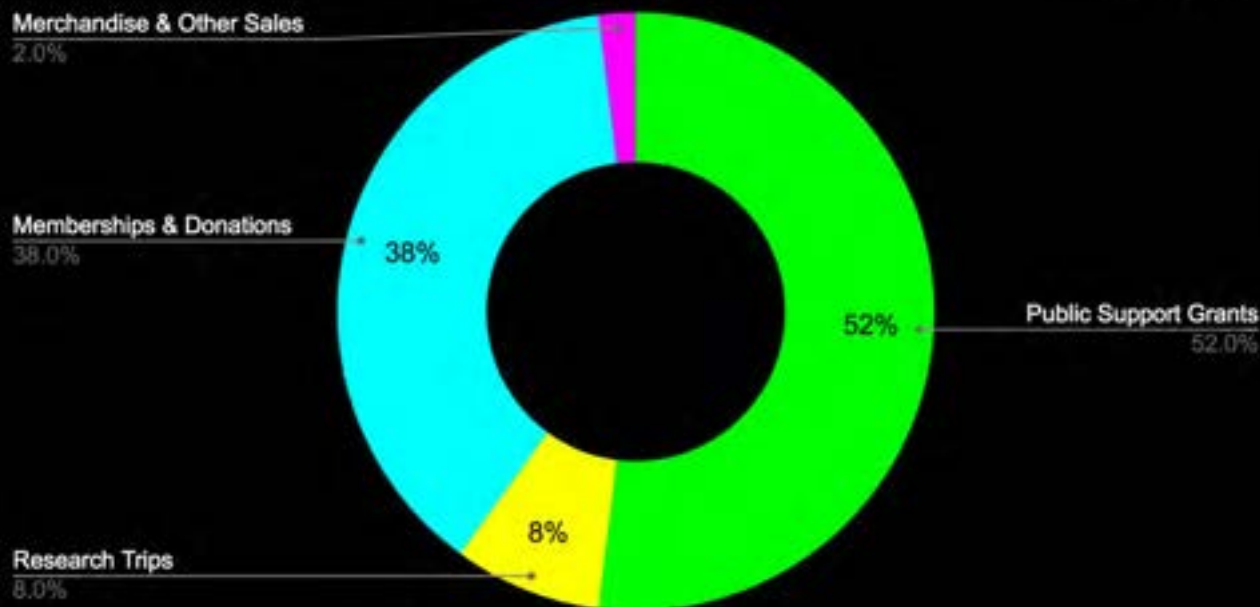
A FEMALE ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHIN IN THE FUSED AGE CLASS OBSERVED DURING THE 2020 FIELD SEASON IS ONE OF THE 3 WHO MIGRATED TO GBB FROM LBB



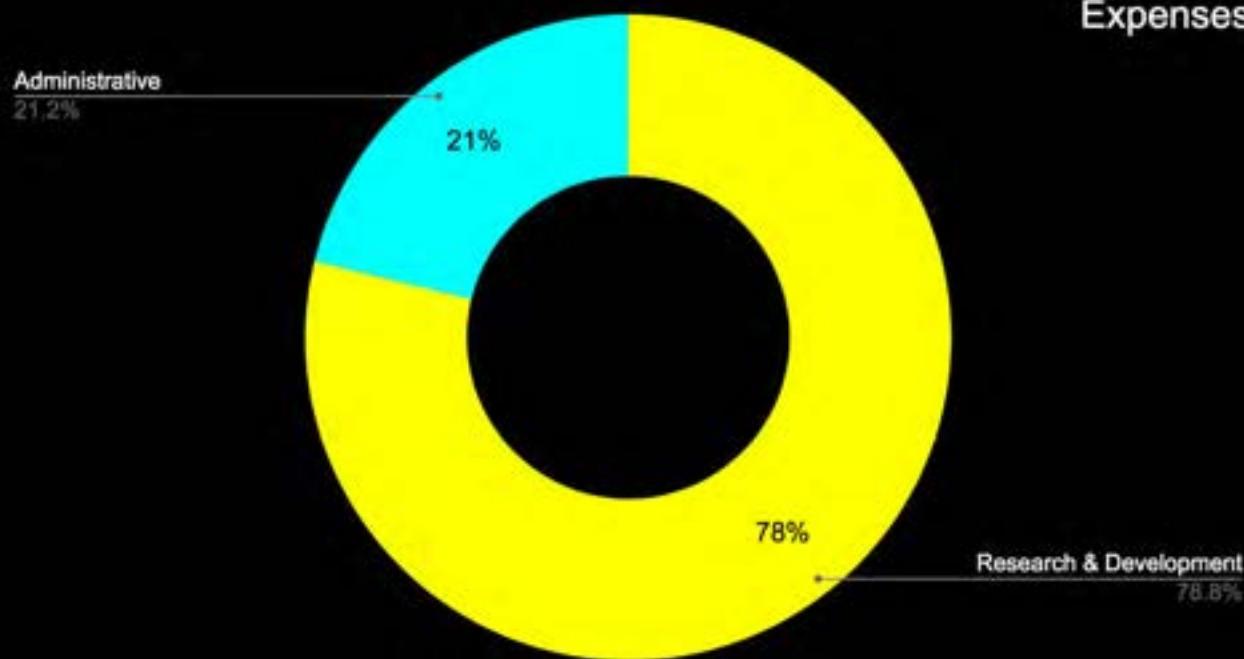
ATLANTIC SPOTTED DOLPHINS EXHIBITING COURTSHIP BEHAVIOR  
OBSERVED DURING THE 2020 FIELD SEASON

# FINANCIAL REPORTS

## Revenue



## Expenses



# AUDITOR'S STATEMENT



## FRIEDMAN, FELDMESSER & KARPELES CPA LLC

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

641 University Blvd, Suite 210 Jupiter FL 33458 phone (561)622-9990 fax (561)622-2523

Kenneth R. Friedman, CPA  
Mark S. Feldmesser, CPA  
Richard L. Karpeles, CPA

### INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Executive Director and Board of Directors of  
Wild Dolphin Project, Inc.  
Jupiter, Florida

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Wild Dolphin Project, Inc. (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as of October 31, 2020, and the related statements of activities and changes in net assets, functional expenses and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the management of Wild Dolphin Project, Inc.

#### Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

#### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

#### Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Wild Dolphin Project, Inc. as of October 31, 2020, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

#### Report on Summarized Comparative Information

We have previously audited Wild Dolphin Project, Inc.'s 2019 financial statements, and our report dated January 17, 2020, expressed an unmodified opinion on those financial statements. In our opinion, the summarized information presented herein as of and for the year ended October 31, 2020, is consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements from which it has been derived.

*Friedman, Feldmesser & Karpeles, CPA, LLC*

Friedman, Feldmesser & Karpeles, CPA, LLC  
Jupiter, FL  
March 2, 2021



Animal Behavior and Cognition  
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ABC 2021, 8(1):36-51  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26451/abc.08.01.04.2021>



## Aggressive Behaviors of Adult Male Atlantic Spotted Dolphins: Making Signals Count during Intraspecific and Interspecific Conflicts

Cassandra L. Volker\* & Denise L. Herzing

Wild Dolphin Project and Florida Atlantic University

\*Corresponding author (Email: [cassiewdp@gmail.com](mailto:cassiewdp@gmail.com))

**Citation** – Volker, C. L., & Herzing, D. L. (2021). Aggressive behaviors of adult male Atlantic spotted dolphins: Making signals count during intraspecific and interspecific conflicts. *Animal Behavior and Cognition*, 8(1), 36-51. <https://doi.org/10.26451/abc.08.01.04.2021>

## Satellite-Linked Telemetry Study of a Rehabilitated and Released Atlantic Spotted Dolphin in the Bahamas Provides Insights into Broader Ranging Patterns and Conservation Needs

Charlotte Dunn,<sup>1,2</sup> Diane Claridge,<sup>1,2</sup> Denise Herzing,<sup>3,4</sup> Cassie Volker,<sup>3</sup> Kelly Melillo-Sweeting,<sup>5</sup> Randall S. Wells,<sup>6</sup> Ted Turner,<sup>7</sup> and Kelly O'Sullivan<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation, Abaco, Bahamas  
E-mail: [cdunn@bahamaswhales.org](mailto:cdunn@bahamaswhales.org)

<sup>2</sup>Sea Mammal Research Unit, Scottish Oceans Institute, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Scotland

<sup>3</sup>Wild Dolphin Project, Jupiter, FL 33468, USA

<sup>4</sup>Department of Biological Sciences, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA

<sup>5</sup>Dolphin Communication Project, Port Saint Lucie, FL 34985, USA

<sup>6</sup>Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program,  
c/o Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, FL 34236, USA

<sup>7</sup>Dolphin Cay, Atlantis, Nassau, Bahamas

# Denise Herzing Earns Sea Hero Honors for Bahamas Dolphin Research

Spending 35 years with a single group of dolphins makes clear how their world—and ours—is changing

By Scuba Diving Editors July 6, 2020



Denise conducting her research among Atlantic spotted dolphins in The Bahamas. Photo courtesy of Denise L. Herzing



## STUDYING DOLPHINS IN THE WILD: MY STORY

DENISE L. HERZING

When I was 12 years old, I used to read the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and I would always stop at the whale and dolphin page. I wondered what their lives were like in the wild and what they were thinking. At that time (see Goodall) was non-studying chimpanzees, Dian Fossey was non-studying gorillas, and Cynthia Milton was studying sea turtles. All these researchers had

© SCUBA DIVERS 2020 scuba-diving 41

## PROJECTIONS & GOALS

Our long term goals remain the same. We want to continue to follow known and new individuals in the Northern Bahamas, both Atlantic spotted dolphins and Bottlenose dolphins. We track life history information, such as reproduction and calf survivability. Collecting fecal material in the water also allows us to determine paternity of the calves, a very important aspect of their life history.

We also continue to record underwater behavior with sound, to be able to correlate sounds and behaviors. New to this aspect is the regular recording of high frequency information, localization information, and machine learning to understand the complexity of their communication system.

Finally, we have been focused on expanding our involvement in local education and community events. Our annual Wild Ocean Science event is purposed to bring knowledge into our local community to increase awareness of ocean life and issues of climate change.

Dr. Denise Herzing  
Research Director / Founder  
Wild Dolphin Project



## STAY CONNECTED



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



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