

SIGHTINGS!

by



MareCet

Jan 2013: Issue 1

2012 HIGHLIGHTS!

2013 PREVIEWS

*Sneak peek at what's in
store*

**lil' MareCet shop
is open!**

*Get your MareCet
merchandise now*

Langkawi Dolphin Research

*Find out the current status of our flagship
project*

Words from the helm...

We are pleased that MareCet has finally arrived AND just turned one! MareCet was an idea of ours that simmered for nearly 2 years, and it was one of those things that we decided to turn into reality one fine day when we said, "Let's just do it, or else, we will never get to it!". After months of preparation and doing all our background research on just what it takes to set up a non-governmental organization in Malaysia, we officially registered MareCet on 06 January 2012. It was both our dreams to establish an organization that would further advance marine mammal research in Malaysia, and using whales and dolphins as flagship animals to promote marine conservation within Malaysian society and the greater Southeast Asian region. This vision of ours is reflected in the organization's name; *Mare* is Latin for "ocean" and *Cet* is a truncation of the word "cetacean", which is the collective name for whales, dolphins and porpoises.

Having had limited resources to refer upon while we were both embarking on our dreams of becoming marine mammal scientists, we also decided that MareCet would be an avenue for aspiring Malaysians who are keen on marine mammalogy to gain hands-on learning experiences to hone their ambitions. After all, with marine science in Malaysia still very much in its infancy, there lies a great task ahead to groom the next generation of capable and qualified marine scientists. Lastly, did you know that 9 out of 10 Malaysians do not know that there are marine mammals in Malaysia? We kid you not! It is therefore one of our missions through MareCet to improve that knowledge and bring awareness on these magnificent and charismatic marine animals to every Malaysian out there. Knowledge is power, and without knowing about our marine mammals, we cannot be compelled to want to safeguard their future, which, in the end, means safeguarding our own.

In the past year since its inception, MareCet has grown rapidly from strength to strength. We have established various research projects and other awareness activities, and had various opportunities to partake in conservation-related events, both locally and internationally. We hope you enjoy reading all about our progress so far in this first issue of our annual newsletter - SiGHTINGS! The journey's just begun and we are excited to share it with all of you. Thank you for the privilege.



Louisa Ponnampalam, PhD
Chairperson / Co-founder



Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne
Vice-Chairperson / Co-founder

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Navigating the MareCet zone

MareCet's gone global!

That's right, MareCet has a world-wide presence, in the world wide web that is. If you want to know more about MareCet you can simply log on to our website www.marecet.org.

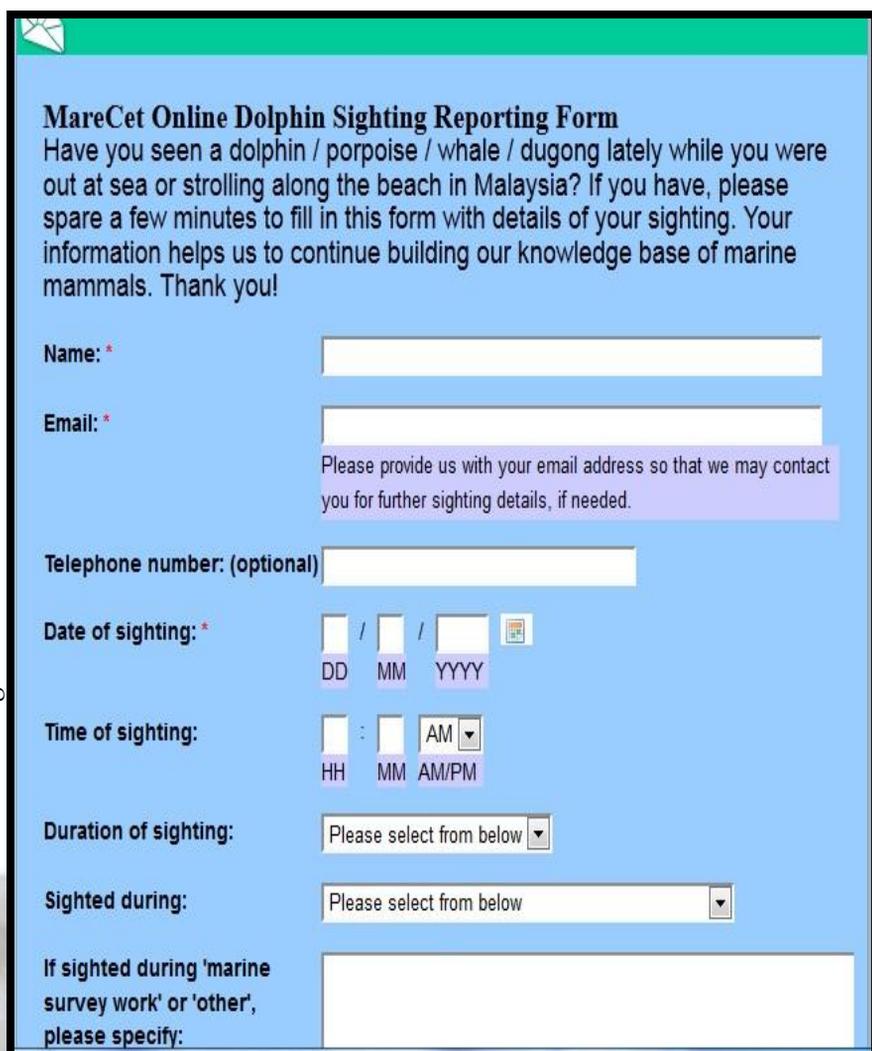
Our brand new website features important aspects of MareCet, such as its vision and mission. Take the time to visit our pages, and get to know the men and women behind this scientific research-based organization. There are plenty of activities being carried out, so keep yourself in the loop by checking out our activities page from time to time. You can also learn more from our website about how you can support our work. For those keen to know more about marine mammals, the website provides information on these animals and you can be assured that you can get the right fact sheets and publications from www.marecet.org.

Report a Sighting!

Ever wanted to be a scientist for a day? Now you can by helping us collect information on marine mammals through our online sightings form. Whenever you come across a marine mammal be it whale, dolphin, porpoise or dugong, you can help advance our knowledge on these animals by sharing your experience through filling in the information listed in the form. The information provided will assist us to understand how these animals utilize our waters and go a long way in the development of meaningful management and conservation actions.

The sightings form can be accessed on our website at www.marecet.org.

Keep an eye out for fins, flukes, blows and splashes!



MareCet Online Dolphin Sighting Reporting Form
Have you seen a dolphin / porpoise / whale / dugong lately while you were out at sea or strolling along the beach in Malaysia? If you have, please spare a few minutes to fill in this form with details of your sighting. Your information helps us to continue building our knowledge base of marine mammals. Thank you!

Name: *

Email: *
Please provide us with your email address so that we may contact you for further sighting details, if needed.

Telephone number: (optional)

Date of sighting: * / / 
DD MM YYYY

Time of sighting: : AM/PM
HH MM AM/PM

Duration of sighting: Please select from below

Sighted during: Please select from below

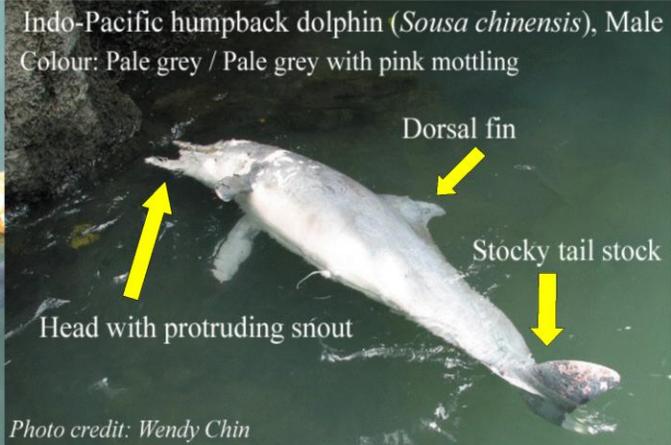
If sighted during 'marine survey work' or 'other', please specify:

Retrieved from www.marecet.org

Sample of the online sighting reporting form. All submissions are treated with utmost confidentiality.

Report a Stranding!

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU CHANCE UPON A DEAD DOLPHIN

<p>Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (<i>Neophocaena phocaenoides</i>) Colour: Dark grey to black</p>  <p>Rounded head</p> <p>No dorsal fin</p> <p>Photo credit: Wendy Chin</p>	<p>Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (<i>Sousa chinensis</i>), Male Colour: Pale grey / Pale grey with pink mottling</p>  <p>Dorsal fin</p> <p>Stocky tail stock</p> <p>Head with protruding snout</p> <p>Photo credit: Wendy Chin</p>	
<p>Sometimes, you may only find / encounter a very decomposed dolphin / porpoise and its skull. It may look like this:</p>	 <p>Skull (unidentified species of dolphin/porpoise)</p> <p>Photo credit: Wendy Chin</p>	 <p>Photo credit: Wendy Chin</p>

CALL THE  MareCet RESEARCH TEAM

PHONE NUMBER: 0111 – 577 6802

A dead / stranded dolphin is very valuable to science. By informing us of a dead or stranded animal, we are able to guide you through the response process, to enable the proper preservation of the specimen for science and conservation.

Retrieved from www.marecet.org

Stranding hotline poster released in early 2012 to assist in increasing response rate to marine mammal stranding incidents.

See a stranded dolphin and not sure what to do? Called emergency services (999) and even they seemed unsure on what to do? Don't worry, we know how it feels.

In anticipation on the establishment of a national stranding network, MareCet has recently released its own stranding hotline to help facilitate response to marine mammal stranding incidents nationwide. Our hotline is manned 24 hours, 7 days a week and all reports are treated in confidence. Upon receipt of a report, the MareCet team will then alert the relevant parties and authorities to ensure that proper response is undertaken for the stranded animal.

The lil' MareCet shop is open!

We have some lovely merchandise for sale at our lil' MareCet shop. All proceeds from each purchase goes back to support our research and conservation efforts. Please have a browse through, and if you'd like to make a purchase, you may contact us at ask.marecet@gmail.com.



We all need t-shirts right? So why not support the good work of MareCet by purchasing these trendy new t-shirts. Impress friends by showing them how an adult Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (pink) differs from a young one (grey) with the help of these colorful illustrations. It's bound to be an excellent conversation starter in the presence of strangers!

Exclusively designed by Ms. Katrina Lisa, a talented local artist, T-shirts are available in XL, L, M, and S unisex sizes. Each t-shirt is priced at RM30 per piece. More t-shirt designs will be coming in 2013, so stay tuned!




Exclusive Langkawi Dolphin Research (LDR) merchandise are available. Get the limited edition LDR bag (RM 15), waterproof sticker (RM 2) and 'Marine mammals of the Langkawi Archipelago' poster (RM 10).

Available while stocks last.

Design by Chin Pik Wun

Ongoing Projects

Langkawi Dolphin Research:

MareCet's flagship project



Photo: MareCet



An Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) surfaces near our survey vessel in 2011.

Our flagship project -Langkawi Dolphin Research (LDR) is our pride and continues to grow from strength to strength since its humble beginnings in late 2010. The project is mainly focused on the distribution, abundance and ecology of two commonly occurring species in Langkawi, which are the Indo-Pacific finless porpoises (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*), though we also record the presence of other less frequently occurring species such as the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*) and Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*). We have, since 2010, with initial guidance and assistance from Ms. Anouk Ilangakoon, IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group member, been collecting data for estimating the abundance of animals using the DISTANCE sampling method as well as the mark-recapture method via photo-identification of dorsal fins.

There are at least 140 Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins that we have catalogued, some

individuals of which have been re-sighted in specific areas in Langkawi as many as nine times! Along with that, we have been collecting water parameter data in the area and at the locations of sightings, to examine the habitat characteristics and habitat preferences of our focal species and to eventually conduct some analysis on habitat modeling. Further to that, we have had informal interviews with 401 local fishermen and tour boat drivers altogether, to gather data on the incidences of accidental capture of cetaceans in Langkawi and also to gauge the locals' perceptions on cetaceans and conservation of the marine environment. We have hosted various community workshops for the tour boat drivers in Langkawi, to share with them our research findings as a means for them to transfer the knowledge to their guests. In addition, the workshops were also intended to encourage third party reporting of cetacean sightings, and to brief these boat drivers on best practices when manoeuvring around a group of dolphins or porpoises.



Photo: MareCet

Close-up view of the head of a finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) sighted in Langkawi, 2011.

In 2012, we started a new component for the project in the form of acoustic surveys on the animals. The new component of our research is in close collaboration with Dr. Satoko Kimura who is a JSPS Research Fellow from Nagoya University, Japan. Using two custom-made acoustics equipment called the A-tag and AUSOMS-mini respectively, our aim is to estimate the abundance of our two focal species using their echolocation clicks, and to compare the results with our estimate that would be derived from visual observations. Additionally, we are examining the acoustic signal patterns of these animals under different environmental conditions within our survey area.



Photo: MareCet

LDR volunteer conducting an interview with a local fisherman.

This new component of our project is very exciting as it is the first time that we are using the acoustic method, in addition to more conventional visual methods, to study cetaceans in the country! In December 2012, our project was honoured with a visit by Dr. Tomonari Akamatsu, who is one of the leading cetacean acoustics researchers in the world. His visit proved to be most valuable to our team, as we learned more about the acoustic method and how to improve our survey design. In this coming year, we

will be working up our data on estimation of abundances of our focal species, as well as analyzing their distribution patterns and movements around the archipelago. Not only does LDR engage in scientific research, our work provides members of the general public, particularly undergraduate students an opportunity to partake in hands-on cetacean research through volunteer opportunities on our surveys. We also continue to engage with the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) to provide them with updates on our work.



Photo: V. Kuit

LDR team with Dr. Jay Sweeney, Dr. Rae Stone, Dr. Tom Akamatsu and Dr. Satoko Kimura back from a survey in 2012.

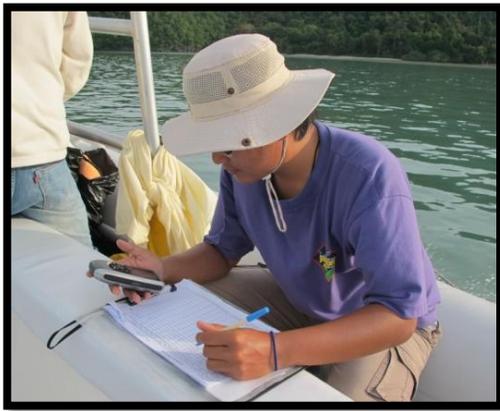


Our research and conservation efforts in Langkawi thus far would not be possible without support from the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Grant, Indo-Pacific Cetacean Fund, University Malaya Research Grant, Telaga Harbour, Tropical Resort Langkawi, Green Village Resort, Dolphin Quest Inc., JSPS Research Fellowship for Young Scientists (24-3578) and JSPS Institutional Program for Young Researcher Overseas Visits.



Photo: T. A. Yong

LDR volunteer, Vivian Kuit hanging a poster at a fishing jetty to raise awareness on marine mammals in Langkawi.



LDR volunteer, Yong Teck Ann helping to record data.

We are also very grateful for the help of all our volunteers to date - Anouk Ilangakoon, Tan Yee Keat, Vivian Kuit, Yong Teck Ann, Nurul Bariyah Babu, Grace Duraisingham, Traci Tay, Goh Zhe Zuan, Lai Kean Sim, Jenny Ngeian Machau, Malcolm Lau, Jenny Cheng, Gavin Fong, Sonia Sham, Michelle Fiddes, Wendy Chin, Marc de Faoite, Ng Jol Ern, Tan Yen Sheng, Tan Yen Joe, Long Fu Chen, Wong Soon Huei, Eliz Azhar, Teyo Qing Yue, Ang Pei-Hsia, Ang Swee Boon, Chung Jing Xiang. We also thank Dr Gill Braulik for advice and suggestions given to us on survey design.

Dugong and Seagrass Conservation Project

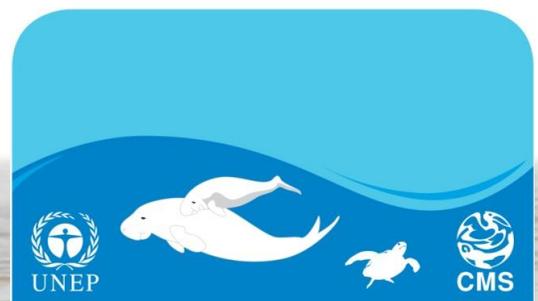
MareCet is proud to be a part of a multi-agency, multi-country (Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Vanuatu, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Timor Leste) dugong and seagrass conservation project titled "Enhancing the conservation effectiveness of seagrass ecosystems supporting globally significant populations of dugong across the Indian and Pacific Ocean Basins", which is initiated by the UNEP/CMS Dugong MoU Secretariat in Abu Dhabi and supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

Further to that, MareCet's chairperson, Dr Louisa Ponnampalam was appointed as the National Project Development Coordinator for Malaysia, for the Project Preparation Grant Phase (Oct 2012 - April 2013). MareCet's involvement in this project will include both research on dugongs and seagrass in Peninsular Malaysia (Johor) and also conservation and awareness-raising activities targeted at the various levels of Malaysian society.



A dugong mother and calf pair sighted off Pulau Tinggi, Johor, during aerial surveys in 2010.

Photo: L. Ponnampalam



Project was initiated by United Nations Environmental Program / Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) office in Abu Dhabi.

Research on coastal dolphins, Trat province, Thailand, eastern Gulf of Thailand



A pod of Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) sighted during a survey. Photo: H. M. Duc

MareCet is proud to be a part of the multi-agency and multi-disciplinary research and conservation project on coastal cetaceans in Trat Province in Thailand, which is located in the eastern Gulf of Thailand, close to the Thai-Cambodian border. Led by Prof. Dr. Ellen Hines from San Francisco State University, this project has been ongoing since 2008, with MareCet's chairperson, Dr Louisa Ponnampalam being one of the co-principal investigators and founding members of the project, which also include staff from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources Thailand and Ms. Anouk Ilangakoon who is a IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group member. The research is currently focused on the abundance and ecology of the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) and the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) in the survey area that stretches from Ban Laem Klat to Khlong Yai. This year, the project will survey for cetaceans around the Koh Chang Archipelago, while also continuing with its usual survey of cetaceans along the Trat coastline.



Survey team members. Photo: E. Hines

MareCet's 2012

National Marine Mammal Stranding Network

In July 2009, MareCet's co-founders, Louisa and Fairul, together with the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA) organized a roundtable discussion with stakeholders on the need to establish a national marine mammal stranding response network. The discussion provided the impetus for the initiative and as was agreed by everyone in attendance, the network will be led by the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Malaysia, being the management authority for marine mammals in the country. A Taskforce was formed to spearhead the network's initiatives of which MareCet is currently a member.

Further meetings were hosted by the DOF following that initial roundtable discussion to discuss the establishment of the network in further detail including preparing the response protocol, logistical planning and identifying financial and training requirements. MareCet has been closely involved throughout the process and was given responsibility to prepare the stranding response protocol which was submitted in early 2011. The last meeting on this initiative was conducted in the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Corporation (SEAFDEC) office in Chendering, Terengganu, in December 2011 where it was agreed by all members that the stranding network will be officially established in March 2012.



Photos: MareCet

(L) An unidentified baleen whale carcass stranded in Pulau Sayak, Kedah in 2011. (R) MareCet team on-site to assist and conduct sampling.

Unfortunately, since then, no further meetings have been undertaken since then and it has been quiet on all fronts. Yet, marine mammal stranding incidents are still occurring with reports coming in of stranding incidences in all parts of the country. Without an official stranding network in place, these incidents are still being administered to in an ad-hoc manner, with first responders commonly at a loss on what they should do.

MareCet continues to advocate for the immediate establishment of the response network and hopes that in 2013, it will become a reality. Granted, the establishment of a network is only a small step in improving marine mammal research and conservation in the country, however, we believe it is a crucial step for Malaysia to undertake as she strives to excel in environmental governance. The network symbolizes hope that there may still be a chance for everyone of us to work together to look after our environment and those that live within it.

DMPM Marine Megafauna Stranding Network

Although efforts to establish the national marine mammal stranding response network appears to have stranded (pun intended) in recent times, mini-networks are starting to take shape all over the country. As those in Sabah and Sarawak have had their own collaboration to attend to stranding incidents, now the Department of Marine Parks Malaysia (DMPM) has decided to start their own network to improve their own capacity to handle stranding incidents occurring within their jurisdiction.

We were invited by DMPM to the inaugural meeting in Tg. Leman, Johor, on 13th September 2012 to provide advice on how such a network can be implemented. At the meeting, it was decided that MareCet will be appointed on an advisory basis to the DMPM network to assist in training their officers on stranding response procedures and provide advisory services as and when necessary. The DMPM initiative will complement the national network upon its establishment in the future.

MareCet in center of Court's attention!



Photo: L. Ponnampalam

Fairul presenting during the 1st Green Court Seminar.

Environmental issues are getting higher level of interest in Malaysia and with the increasing number of environmental-related incidents in the country, the Malaysian judiciary branch of government has announced that a Green Court will be set up to focus on handling environmental cases. In September, Tun Arifin Zakaria, the Chief Justice of Malaysia officially announced the establishment of Malaysia's own Green Court.

As one may imagine, environmental issues are rarely clear-cut and effects of any incidents can cause implications to other matters such as public health, social well-being, community livelihood,

and may even be a catalyst for a host of other issues to emerge to the environment including that involving wildlife and their habitats. In light of the complexity of the issues, members of the judiciary have been requested to attend training sessions to familiarize themselves with environmental issues and concerns to ensure the effectiveness of the Green Court.

In November, we were invited to present on the state of and the issues relevant to Malaysia's marine and coastal environment in the inaugural Green Court 'training' session. The session had active participation from all the top echelons of the Malaysian judiciary including the honorable Chief Judge of Malaya, honorable Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak, honorable judges from the Federal Court, Court of Appeals, and the High Court and the honorable judges of the Magistrate and Sessions Court. As part of the ongoing process of building the capacity of the judiciary on environmental matters, MareCet will continue to provide training and support for the Green Court in the years to come, starting from the next training session currently scheduled for January 2013, which will involve honorable judges from the various courts and public prosecutors from the Attorney General's office.

Photos: Faizal Fairuz



2012 Jumble Sales

We held two fundraisers in 2012 - one in April, which was a jumble sale held at the Summit Shopping Centre in USJ, and the other in August, which was a garage sale held in Petaling Jaya. Items that were sold were kindly donated to us by friends and their friends,

and included books, electricals, bric-a-brac, clothes, shoes, household items, artwork and exercise equipment! Not only did these two events help us raise the funds necessary to run, it also gave us the opportunity to introduce MareCet and its cause. We still have a stack of good books leftover from these fundraisers - we may just have a book car boot sale in 2013! Stay tuned!

Langkawi Nature Fest

MareCet made an appearance during the recent Langkawi Nature Festival (LNF) 2012 from 23 to 24 November 2012. Organised by the Natural History Tours Sdn Bhd, the LNF celebrates the various natural wonders of Langkawi. Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam was invited to deliver a talk on the marine mammals of Langkawi which she delivered to a very appreciative audience.

During the fest, MareCet was graciously given the opportunity to exhibit their research initiatives along with marine mammal facts at the Langkawi Fair Mall. Through the two day exhibition, the team helped raise awareness among the locals in Langkawi in regards to marine mammals; their existence and the threats they face. The MareCet team also managed to raise a significant amount of funds by selling an array of merchandise, such as t-shirts, posters and bags.

Amongst other activities that took place was the Eco Walk for Nature at Gunung Raya, Nature Workshops and talks by renowned naturalists, scientists and photographers. The Natural History Tours Sdn Bhd then celebrated the closing of the event by hosting a gala dinner on the 24th November for individuals that helped make the event a success.



Dr. Louisa presenting during Langkawi Nature Fest.

Photo: Natural History Tours Sdn Bhd



The MareCet booth during the LNF event.

Photo: Natural History Tours Sdn Bhd

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to participate in the world's longest running dolphin research project...

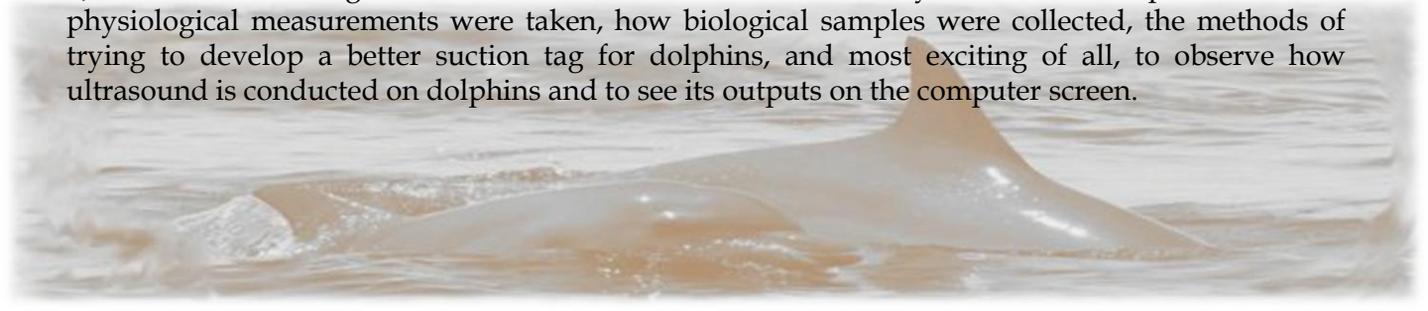
In May, we were offered the opportunity of a lifetime to join the Sarasota Dolphin Health Assessments Project, which is one of the many sub-projects of the Sarasota Dolphin Research Project (SDRP). The opportunity came courtesy of Dr. Jay Sweeney, one of SDRP's lead vets and a supporter of MareCet, with an official invitation from Dr. Randy Wells, the project leader. The SDRP is well-known globally, and we had seen the name "Randall Wells" on many scientific publications, so it was rather surreal that we would be making the trip halfway across the world from Malaysia to partake in the world's longest running dolphin research program and meet the man himself.



Photos: MareCet

(L) The MareCet team on a survey vessel with other survey team members. (R) Dr. Louisa assisting with data recording.

For five days, we assisted the SDRP team in the field and were able to participate in most aspects of the fieldwork, which included releasing the net from the boat, holding the dolphins in the water, assisted in the animals' subsequent releases and helped the acoustic tracking team record data on *R/V Nai'a*. We also got to witness first hand the various ways in which morphometric and physiological measurements were taken, how biological samples were collected, the methods of trying to develop a better suction tag for dolphins, and most exciting of all, to observe how ultrasound is conducted on dolphins and to see its outputs on the computer screen.



Participating in this project has sparked many new ideas for our future research work in Malaysia, especially in our core project area in the Langkawi Archipelago. We were especially inspired by all the dedicated vets working so professionally in tandem with each other onboard *R/V Flip*. Observing such skill and professionalism in marine mammal veterinary care has reinforced our hopes and dreams of providing training in this field, through our organization and with the tutelage of Dr. Sweeney, to keen and dedicated vets in Malaysia. Although there are many qualified vets in Malaysia, none have ever been trained in marine mammal husbandry, resulting in a lack of know-how when it comes to dealing with stranded animals, dead or alive.



Photos: SDRP. Photo taken under National Marine Fisheries Service Scientific Research Permit No. 15543

The MareCet team with Dr. Randall Wells, Project Director for SDRP, SDRP team members and volunteers on *R/V Flip*.

We already have a catalogue of dorsal fins of 140 Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins from Langkawi, which we started in November 2010, and would like to improve the ways in which we manage our database by following some of the examples set by the SDRP team. Someday, hopefully not too long from now, perhaps we will be able to emulate the health assessments efforts of the SDRP team by doing the same with cetaceans in Langkawi. Although not exactly dolphin-related, we were also motivated by the inter-coastal waterway channel (IWC) and speed zone systems in Sarasota Bay, and hope to suggest similar vessel traffic guidelines to the authorities in Langkawi in areas where we will ascertain to be critical habitats for cetaceans.



Top: Health assessment underway on *R/V Flip*
Bottom: Example of a speed reminder sign found throughout the IWC.

Upcoming in 2013...

FLEX

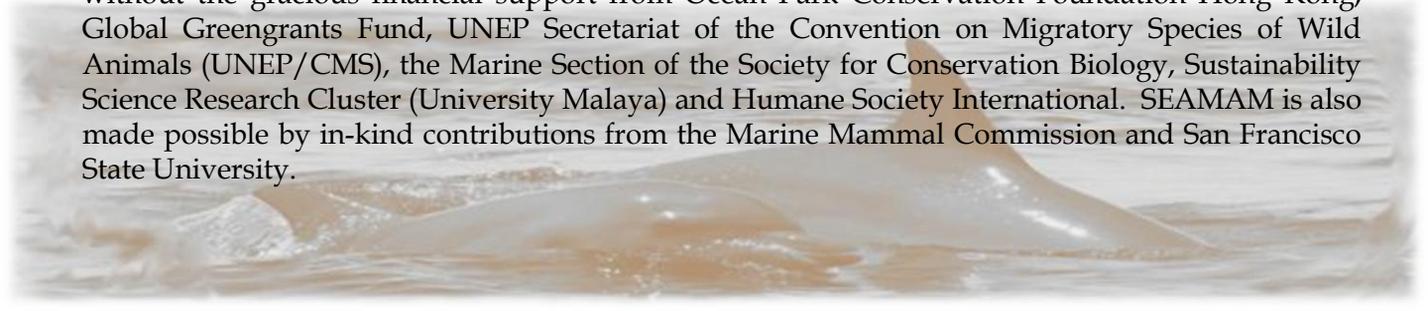
MareCet's first floating exhibition (FLEX) will be launched in 2013 as part of our awareness campaign to share our research findings to the general public. Located in Langkawi, Kedah, FLEX will describe cetaceans, their behaviours and the threats they face through interactive exhibits suitable for all ages. Among the highlights include life-sized models of selected cetaceans, audio clips of real cetaceans and exciting video footage of cetaceans including a birthing of a baby dolphin!

FLEX is made possible through funds and in-kind contributions from Dolphin Quest Inc., Telaga Harbour and the Indo-Pacific Cetacean Fund. Furthermore, other in-kind contributions were received from Dolphin Quest Inc., Dr. Tom Akamatsu, Dr. Kanjana Adulyanukosol, Mr Surasak Thongsukdee, the Sarawak Dolphin Project, Dr. Keiko Sekiguchi and our project volunteers Jasmine Zulkifli, Nizar Sulaiman, Umami Haslinda Mohd. Rosli, Daphne Cheok, Cheah Yee Siong, Shahril Azhar, and Abdul Mohsin Aminuddin.

We were honored to receive a visit from Dr. Jay Sweeney and Dr. Rae Stone, co-founders of Dolphin Quest Inc., in Langkawi in 2012. Their visit provided us a great opportunity to better acquaint them with LDR and the proposed site for FLEX, and our team received valuable advice and insights from the both of them on how best to develop education and awareness modules for the general public.

SEAMAM III

Come March 2013, MareCet, in collaboration with the Institute of Ocean & Earth Sciences, University Malaya, will play host to the Third Southeast Asian Symposium on Marine Mammals (SEAMAM III) from 4 - 10 March in Fave Hotel, Langkawi. The symposium is a follow-up to its predecessors SEAMAM I and SEAMAM II which were held in 1995 and 2002 in the Philippines. SEAMAM III will be fortunate to have its keynote speech given by Dr Randall Reeves, Chairperson of the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group. The symposium will see 60 marine mammal researchers from across Southeast Asia and Australia come together to discuss current research topics, conservation issues, and exchange knowledge on the current research methodologies and technologies. It will be a platform to better develop conservation and management efforts in this region and to foster closer ties and expand research networks amongst researchers in this region that is under threat from severe marine environmental degradation. The week-long symposium will include delegates from each country giving a country status report on marine mammals, a one-day boat trip around Langkawi, as well as two days of concurrent workshops relating to research methodology and marine management topics. The symposium would not be possible without the gracious financial support from Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, Global Greengrants Fund, UNEP Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS), the Marine Section of the Society for Conservation Biology, Sustainability Science Research Cluster (University Malaya) and Humane Society International. SEAMAM is also made possible by in-kind contributions from the Marine Mammal Commission and San Francisco State University.



Matang Dolphin Research Project

This year, MareCet embarks on a new research project in the world famous Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve in the state of Perak, focusing on the comprehensive ecology and conservation of coastal cetaceans in an area well-known as "the world's best managed mangrove production forest" and is a commercially important fisheries area for Malaysia.

We had the opportunity to conduct some rapid surveys in the area in 2011 and 2012, and found it to be a viable site for the study of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) and Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*). Components of this project will include estimation of abundance of the animals within the study site, investigation of habitat preferences, habitat use and movements of the dolphins, study of dolphin-fisheries interactions and to provide advisory for any upcoming plans for the development of a small-scale dolphin-watching industry in the area. Cetaceans have never been studied in this ecologically important and diverse area, and we are very excited to be doing so.



Photo: MareCet

A pair of Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) observed during the 2012 rapid survey.



Photo: MareCet



Photo: MareCet

A local fisherman collecting cockles in the Matang Forest Reserve.

A pair of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) swimming near the mangroves in Matang.

Publications, presentations and media coverage

As a research and conservation entity, it is important that our work is shared with the scientific community, governmental agencies, local communities where we work and the public at large. The following is a list of our publications (including contributed articles), presentations and media coverage to date. Some of these are available as electronic PDF files upon request to ask.marecet@gmail.com.

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles

- Ponnampalam, L. S., Jamal Hisne, F. I. and Kaur, C. R. 2010. Report on the roundtable discussion on establishing a national marine mammal stranding network in Malaysia. MIMA: 3 August 2010. MIMA Bulletin 17: 38 - 42.
- Ponnampalam, L. S. 2011. Dolphin watching in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman: Tourist perceptions and actual current practice. *Tourism in Marine Environments* 7(2): 81 - 93.
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- Jamal Hisne, F.I. 2012. Discovering Marine Mammals: Ongoing research and conservation in Malaysia, and what it means to be a marine mammal scientist? MIMA World Oceans Week. 14 October 2012, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Jamal Hisne, F.I. 2012. State of the Marine Environment. First National Seminar on Malaysia Green Court. 10 November 2012, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
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Media coverage

- MareCet and her co-founders, Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam and Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne were featured in the radio segment, Earth Matters, by BFM 89.9 on 19 April 2012. The podcast is available at: <http://bfm.my/earth-matters.html>
- MareCet's chairperson, Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam, was featured in an article titled "In the deep" in the Eco-Strategist section of Management Magazine, Volume 47, pages 30 – 33. Management Magazine is a publication of the Malaysian Institute of Management. The article is available online at: <http://www.mim.org.my/pdf/Apr-June2012.pdf>
- MareCet and the Langkawi Dolphin Research Project were featured in The Star Metro section of The Star newspaper on 23 October 2012, in an article titled "Stalking sea mammals in Langkawi", written by Marc de Faoite. The article is available online at: <http://thestar.com.my/lifestyle/story.asp?file=/2012/10/23/lifefocus/12040724&sec=lifefocus>



Thank you for all the support

2012 was a great year for us. Not for one second did we imagine that we will be so blessed with contributions from so many supporters especially as it's only been a year since MareCet was born. Throughout the year we had received financial, equipment, manpower, and moral support and we'd like to take this opportunity to record our heartfelt appreciation to those who have helped us in our efforts thus far.

We would like to thank the Australian Marine Mammal Centre, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities who through the Indo-Pacific Cetacean Fund has provided the much-needed funds to continue our Langkawi Dolphin Research program. The grant has since helped us improve and diversify our research efforts in the area and will continue to allow us to do so for the next few years.

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Here's to an excellent 2013!



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Partnering Opportunities

Our work will not be possible without the many contributions from our partners and supporters. We estimate we would need RM 300,000 annually to cover our operations, not inclusive of our project-related expenses. As such, we welcome all manner of support to build on the funds received from competitive grants to continue our work. Some examples of how your support can assist us include:

- 1 year field survey expenses for LDR = RM 100,000 (5 surveys per year)
- 1 year policy advocacy expenses = RM 15,000
- 1 month operating cost for FLEX = RM 10,000
- DSLR camera + zoom lenses purchase (1 unit) = RM 10,000
- Handheld GPS purchase (2 units) = RM 4,000
- Handheld depth sounder purchase (2 units) = RM 1,500
- Multi-parameter water meter (1 unit) = RM 20,000
- Laptop computer with accessories (1 unit) = RM 5,000
- Stranding response and rescue = RM 5,000
- Support to attend international conference on marine mammal research = RM 20,000

Additionally, we always welcome in-kind contributions including:

Volunteering time for field research, awareness campaigns, and administrative tasks
Equipment such as cameras, video cameras, laptops, personal computers, etc.
Designing and production of merchandise

If you would like to make a donation and/ or contribute in-kind, or to make general partnering inquiries please contact Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam or Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne at partner.marecet@gmail.com.

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"He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass: environment is but a looking glass."

— **James Allen, author**



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