

# **SIGHTINGS!**

**MareCet 2024 Annual Report**



**Searching skin deep: MareCet embarks on conservation genetics**

**Research Updates from the Field!**

**MareCet at the SMM Biennial Conference in Perth**

**Cara Pulau Kita: we made a short film!**



## Words from the Helm

With each passing year, we always try to do better, at the same time, we also try to pace ourselves better. Yet, the year just flies by, as did it in 2024.

Our team continued to grow, as we expanded on the work that we do.

We took to the skies and sharpened our drone flying skills, so that we can continue monitoring dugongs in a safe and cost effective way. Speaking of dugongs, we made not one, but two short films, working with the local islanders of Pulau Sibul and Pulau Tinggi to bring their stories and that of the dugongs to life on screen. Our bycatch mitigation work with local fishers in Perak yielded positive results, as more fishers signed on, and a good number of them reported less bycatch in their nets.

We victoriously wrapped up the third year of our Whales On-The-Wheels mobile marine exhibition, having travelled

to schools all across Peninsular Malaysia, inspiring curiosity and love for our seas. Towards the end of 2024, some of our team members had the opportunity to take our work to the international stage, presenting at the 25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals in Perth, Australia.

We could go on and on about how glorious 2024 was for MareCet, but it's best we let you read about it all yourselves. But before we let you get on with the rest of this newsletter and annual report, we would like to thank each and every one of you that journeyed with us in 2024, and who've been supporting us for so long. MareCet can only grow bigger and better because of the solid support that you give her.

Enjoy the read - do splash right into it!

**FAIRUL + LOUISA**

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# BEST of MareCet's 2024

**205**

**Total number of days for survey**

1,234 Total Hours

588 Total Effort Hours

**17,903km**

**Distance coverage of surveys**

7,713km Total Effort Distance

**245km**

**Distance travelled by Drone**

47 hours drone flight

**49**

**Days for Outreach**

209 Total Hours

2719km Distance coverage

**30**

**Number of Schools Visited**

Across 7 states

**12**

**Edutours conducted**

10,805 persons reached

**87**

**Volunteers recruited**

**5**

**Internships**

**534kg**

**Trash collected**

**216**

**Pingers installed**

**34**

**Fishermen engaged in bycatch project**

**4**

**Stranding Workshops conducted**

67 Participants

**10**

**Talks conducted**

**16**

**Media features**

**9**

**Booths & Exhibitions**

**2**

**Capacity Development Workshops**

**1**

**Sekolah Lestari established**

**2**

**Papers published**

**2**

**Film & Documentaries produced**



**THE YEAR**

**THAT WAS**

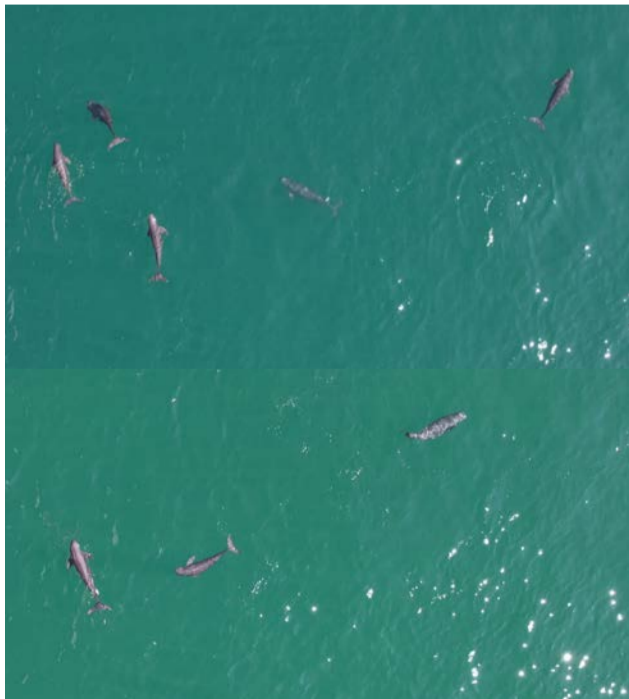




# LANGKAWI DOLPHIN RESEARCH

It feels like just yesterday we set out on our first research survey of 2024, and now we are already reflecting on the year's highlights and challenges!

We successfully conducted three boat-based surveys around the Langkawi Archipelago and adjacent mainland waters of Perlis and Kedah. In total, we spent 271 hours at sea, covering 3,494 km over 36 days spread across three different months. However, we did things a little differently in 2024...



For the Langkawi Dolphin Research Project (LDR) in Langkawi, we placed a stronger focus on studying the Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*), hoping to gather more data on this elusive species, especially through acoustic recordings and drone observations. While we often spot finless porpoises bobbing up and down at the surface, it's challenging to observe their behaviour from the boat. By flying the drone over them, we

aimed to capture a clearer picture of how these porpoises interact, hunt and move through their habitat. Our efforts paid off! We recorded over 50 minutes of drone footage, revealing behaviours that we could rarely observe from the surface. Some of the more exciting moments included porpoises chasing schools of fish, feeding, and even intimate calf-mother interactions, such as the calf rolling over its mother's body. These aerial footages are not only entertaining to watch but also provide important never-seen-before scientific and observation data.

At the same time, we also prioritized acoustic data collection, deploying the SoundTrap underwater recorder to record high-frequency echolocation clicks produced by finless porpoises, which are inaudible to human ears. Some of the recorded click trains included feeding buzzes, which porpoises produce exclusively while foraging or feeding. By combining drone usage with acoustic recordings, we hope to improve our understanding of their movement patterns, communication and potential threats in Malaysian waters.

While our focus in Langkawi shifted towards finless porpoises, we continued our long-term monitoring of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*), Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) and finless porpoises in Kedah and Perlis. Among our many encounters with the animals, two sightings stood out. In Kedah, we observed a large group of usually shy and elusive Irrawaddy dolphins engaging in fascinating social behaviours, herding and displaying some gregarious social interactions among themselves. Meanwhile, in Perlis, we sighted a pod of more than 50 humpback dolphins energetically leaping and breaching, with a triple leap simultaneously by a calf, its presumed mother, and a juvenile before they vanished from plain sight.

In total, we had 57 finless porpoise sightings, 26 humpback dolphin sightings and 19 Irrawaddy dolphin

Throughout the surveys, we deployed both the Aquafeeler and SoundTrap to collect acoustic data while following the animals. In total, we collected 31 hours of acoustic recordings across all focal follow deployments. Unfortunately, one of the Aquafeeler's hydrophone wires was damaged due to excessive use and prolonged saltwater exposure. This is particularly unfortunate as hydrophone repairs are costly. Nevertheless, the other Aquafeeler hydrophone remains functional and continues to capture valuable data for our acoustic research.







# PERAK DOLPHIN RESEARCH

In 2024, the cetacean research project in Perak proudly marked its 11th year of research! We successfully conducted a record-breaking 88 days of boat-based surveys in the year in the waters of Perak – the highest in the past decade! Our research team conducted eight boat-based surveys between March and October, accumulating 630.1 hours, and covering a total distance of 8,859.1 km across the waters of Matang (northern Perak) and Manjung-Pangkor Island (southern Perak). These surveys resulted in 110 cetacean sightings, including 57 sightings of Irrawaddy dolphins, 45 sightings of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, 7 sightings of Indo-Pacific finless porpoises, and 1 sighting of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins. With the expansion of our research to southern Perak, we gained valuable insights into the distribution patterns of small coastal cetaceans in the region.

Our team also engaged in significant capacity-building efforts, training 5 interns and 25 volunteers in boat-based surveys and bycatch mitigation trials. This hands-on experience has been instrumental in fostering the next generation of marine scientists and conservationists.

A particularly exciting discovery this year was the reappearance of a large group (superpod) of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins at the same location and nearly the same date as last year. After conducting photo-identification on the traveling groups, we confirmed that multiple individuals from the 2023 superpod were present again this year.

Throughout the year, we documented fascinating cetacean behaviours, particularly of Irrawaddy dolphins and humpback dolphins. The typically elusive Irrawaddy dolphins were observed engaging in rare socializing and herding behaviours—an exciting sight for our researchers.

These encounters also led to an extensive collection of acoustic recordings, including rare burst pulses



and whistles, a major breakthrough given the difficulty of documenting Irrawaddy dolphin vocalizations. In total, we recorded over 19 hours of cetacean vocalizations.

In addition to focal follow recordings, our team deployed HydroMoths (acoustic recorders) alongside acoustic pingers to assess dolphin responses to these devices. This effort resulted in an additional 14 hours of recordings, capturing both visual and acoustic behavioural responses to the pingers. While the full analysis is ongoing, preliminary findings suggest that the dolphins may be reacting to the acoustic deterrents as their whistle repertoire changes in presence of pingers—an exciting development that warrants further investigation.

As part of our bycatch mitigation initiative, we expanded our bycatch mitigation project in the Perak region by collaborating with 34 fishers in Perak (in Kuala Sepetang, Matang, Tanjung Piandang, and Pangkor Island) to trial the use of acoustic pingers.





A total of 216 pingers were installed on driftnets and purse seines – Fishtek Marine pingers for driftnets and Future Oceans pingers for purse seines. Preliminary feedback from fishers, after six months to one year of use, indicates that pingers may help reduce cetacean bycatch and depredation while improving their targeted fish catch. To strengthen our findings, we conducted additional pinger observation surveys that totalled 918.06 km over 85.28 hours to study how dolphins react to pingers under different conditions. Additional observation surveys will be conducted in 2025 to assess long-term behavioural responses and potential habituation to the pingers.

Following the success of our first Marine Mammal Stranding and Safe Release Workshop at Pantai Remis in 2023, we also continued our engagement with the local fishing community through two additional marine mammal stranding response and safe release workshops, which were attended by 129 participants.

The first workshop, held on 20 February 2024 at PNK Matang, and the second on 25 September 2024 at PNK Kerian, were conducted in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries Malaysia and Persatuan Nelayan Kawasan (PNK) Kerian. The fishers have learnt about the do's and don'ts when responding to marine mammal strandings, and how to safely release small cetaceans when they are caught in their fishing nets. We were also honored to have representatives from Yayasan Hasanah participate in the PNK Kerian workshop.

Our research and outreach efforts in Perak would not be possible without the generous support of our donors – The Rufford Foundation, Yayasan Hasanah, Yayasan Haji Zainuddin, and Dolphin Quest. We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated skippers, Encik Yusri and the late Abang Herry, our hardworking and fun-to-work-with volunteers, the Department of Fisheries Malaysia, Persatuan Nelayan Kawasan (PNK), and the local fishing community in Perak. Their support and collaboration have been instrumental in advancing our conservation initiatives, and we look forward to continuing this vital work together.



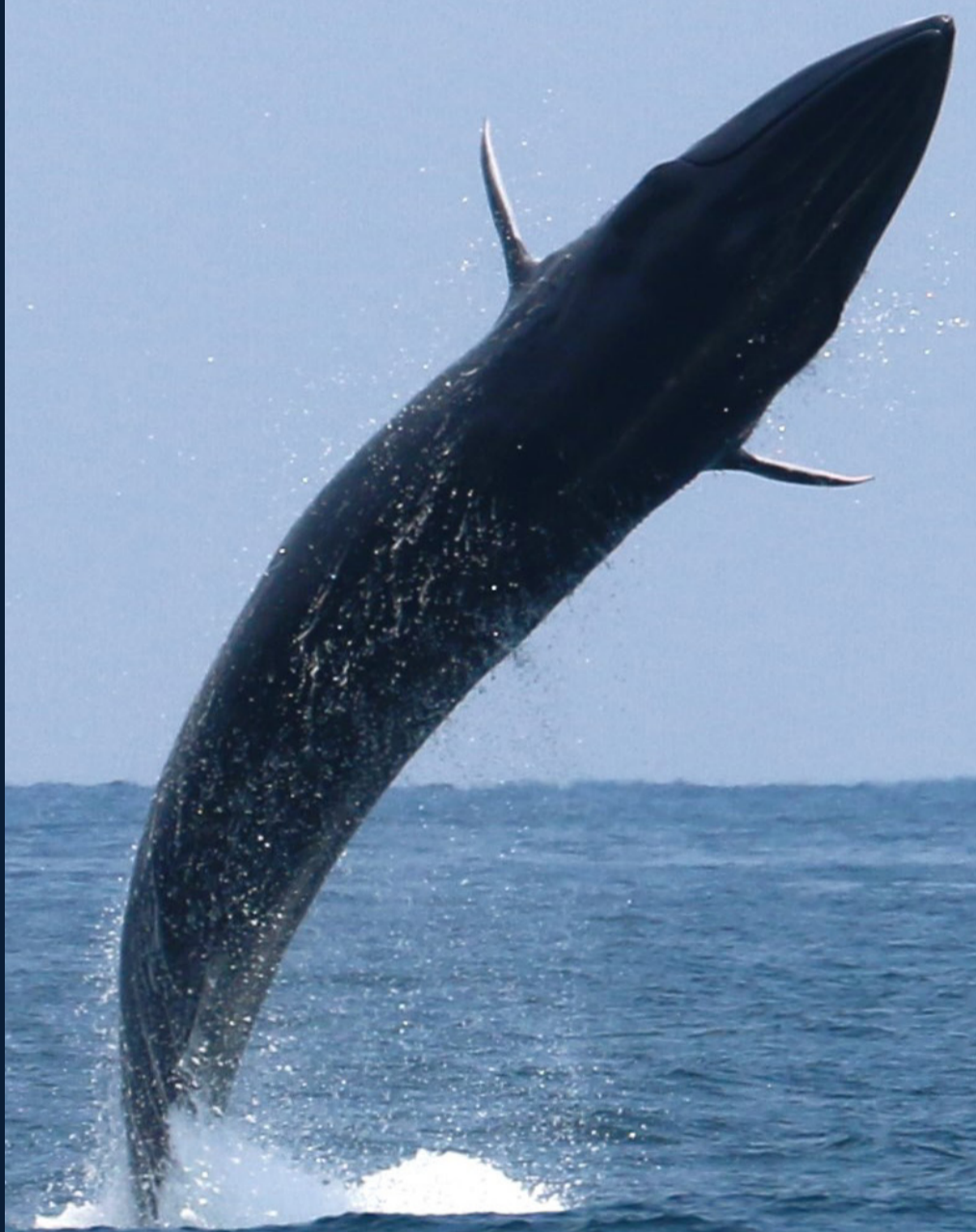
# THE WHALE PROJECT

The WHALE Project in 2024 was nothing short of extraordinary, presenting us with both fascinating observations and pressing conservation concerns.

Over 36 days across three different months, our research survey team spent 287 hours at sea and covered 4,680 km to study Eden's (Bryde's) whales (*Balaenoptera edeni*) in the Payar Archipelago and offshore waters of Kedah. Throughout our survey period, we recorded 33 sightings of these giants, with 19 of them involving feeding behaviour, further reinforcing the importance of these waters as an important feeding ground for the species.

One of the highlights of the year was capturing our first-ever drone footage of a mother-calf pair lunge feeding on a shoal of fish. These aerial observations provided valuable insights into how they feed and possibly the learning process of a calf from its mother. In one of the drone footage, we could see the mother lunging forward and taking a big gulp of a fish shoal, followed by the calf 'mimicking' its mother's action, but missing the fish entirely! Good effort though! We also learned that these whales seem to adjust their feeding techniques based on prey type. So far, we have documented three feeding methods utilized by these whales, adding to our understanding of their feeding and foraging habits in Malaysian waters.

However, not all our sightings were uplifting. We came across a severely emaciated whale with its ribs visibly protruding, and it was exhibiting low activity and spending long periods logging just below the surface. This distressing sight was made worse with another heartbreaking observation - a second emaciated whale entangled in a rope-like object that was wrapped tightly around its rostrum. The entanglement had cut deep into its flesh, leaving a necrotic wound that likely affected its ability to feed efficiently, as it took prolonged dives. On top of that, we also observed several whales, including mothers with calves, swimming and feeding among islands of floating marine debris. The growing presence of plastic waste in these important feeding grounds raises serious concerns about the potential risks of accidental ingestion and habitat degradation. These heartbreaking encounters serve as a painful reminder of the harmful impacts of mismanaged waste that end up as marine debris and abandoned fishing gear.





There were days that we were faced with unfavourable weather conditions, but we managed to pull through and stay on schedule. Despite these challenges, our acoustic research made exciting progress! Our long-term HydroMoth deployments continued across our whale survey areas, playing a crucial role in understanding whale presence and absence in these waters. Eden's whale acoustic research remains limited in the Southeast Asia region, making these recordings vital for discovering new insights into the species' ecology.



However, we know that not every deployment goes as planned. During our October 2024 survey, we lost one of our deployments after just five days in the water. When we arrived for retrieval, it was simply gone. Whether it was taken, lost to unexpected currents, or affected by storms, we will never know. These challenges highlight the risks of leaving equipment in the ocean for extended periods.

Determined to make a difference, a few of our survey team members took action after the whales left the area (as we do not encourage swimming with these wild animals!). We jumped into the water to remove floating marine debris, retrieving as many plastic waste items as we could. We also successfully removed large marine ropes that could have posed a threat to marine life. In total, we collected at least 35 kg of marine debris, just from swimming around. Though it was a small effort, it demonstrates our ongoing commitment to ocean conservation.



Despite this setback, our long-term deployments have captured countless hours of acoustic data, still waiting to be analysed. We're eager to dive into the recordings and uncover new discoveries!

The findings from our 2024 boat-based surveys have shown us the importance of this region for Eden's whales and the challenges they face. As we continue our research efforts, we are more determined than ever to advocate for stronger conservation measures to protect these majestic creatures and their habitat.

The success of The WHALE Project in 2024 was made possible with funding support from Yayasan Sime Darby, The Datai Pledge, Telaga Harbour Terminal, generous donors via the Wildlife Conservation Network, and the cooperation of local community members, our boat skippers, and the 17 volunteers who assisted in our research surveys. Thank you!





# DUGONG RESEARCH & CONSERVATION



We have taken to the skies! Well, not us - Mozzie (the nickname we gave our drone) has. Trials in 2023 proved to be successful, and in 2024, DRC were able to successfully complete two rounds of surveys in the Sibu Archipelago. Mozzie battled the wind and the birds, and she travelled mighty distances returning safely to us each time (though she did still give us a heart attack or two).

Over the course of the surveys, we had the exciting opportunity of observing large dugong herds twice! About 20-30 animals gently coursed through the survey site, with the occasional glimpse of a nostril and fluke. So off we flew Mozzie to capture crucial video data, giving us new insight into the behaviour and movement of these not-so surface active and elusive animals. Encounters such as these inspire us to continue on with our research and conservation work, to ensure the protection of these animals and their habitats.

We also continued our efforts in remote underwater video surveillance (RUVS) deployment, in hopes of capturing these animals underwater to better understand their habitat use and foraging behaviour. They evade us for now, but we endeavour to continue our deployments in the year moving forward.





# SEA, SCIENCE & SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

MareCet's mission to bring the ocean into school classrooms continued in 2024. We conducted two Sea, Science & Schools (SSS) programmes in Langkawi, one in January and another in July. In January, just before the Chinese New Year holidays, we visited Pulau Tuba and Pulau Dayang Bunting, Langkawi's second and third largest islands.

Our team engaged 230 students from three schools—SK Pulau Tuba, SK Selat Bagan Nyior, and SK Lubuk Chempedak—through talks on marine mammals, interactive booths, and hands-on exhibits, including cetacean skulls, marine mammal figurines, and a trash decomposition game. Students also received the Malay version of our activity book, *Mengeloni Mamalia Marin dan Menyelami Dunia Mereka*, to continue learning at home.

In July, we returned for a Cetacean Edutour and Sustainability Workshop, with the latter facilitated by Kansa Life Project. Students had the thrilling experience of spotting Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*), including Anggun, Sandra, and Scooper – dolphin individuals regularly sighted in Langkawi since 2017, 2013, and 2016 respectively. During the trip, we also rescued a green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), later named Emelda, found struggling to dive near the ferry channel. With the help of the veterinarian team from Underwater World Langkawi led by Dr. Kavvin Sehgar, and the Department of Fisheries Malaysia, Emelda received medical care and was successfully released back to sea after several months.

The Sustainability Workshop introduced students to “eco-glue,” made by repurposing styrofoam with D-Limonene, an all-natural citrus-derived solvent. This hands-on activity emphasized creative solutions to environmental issues.

We hope to conduct more Cetacean Edutours and sustainability workshops with rural schools, inspiring young ocean stewards.

Special thanks to Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), the dedicated school teachers, and Yayasan Sime Darby for making this programme possible!



# WHALES-ON-THE-WHEELS TOUR



Another year, another Whales On-The-Wheels (WoW) Mobile Marine Education Nationwide Tour for 2024! Following the completion of our nationwide tour in 2023, which saw us travelling to all states and Federal Territories in Peninsular Malaysia across five tour segments, this year's tour – our sixth and seventh segments – focused on revisiting states where we were unable to reach schools previously due to the COVID-19 restrictions. These two segments, which took place in June-July and November-December, prioritized school visits and marked the final stretch of this meaningful journey. From June to July, we traveled to Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, and Johor, while our last tour segment wrapped up in the northwestern regions of Peninsular Malaysia, covering Perak, Pulau Pinang, Kedah, and Perlis. Over these two tours, we visited 26 national schools, reaching more than 10,024 students and 111 teachers, and sharing insights into our work and Malaysia's marine wildlife.

During our stop in Johor Bahru, we had the privilege of participating in SEA LIFE Malaysia's Conservation Day Programme on June 28, 2024. We were honoured to be a part of their event, engaging with visitors and sharing more about MareCet's mission and marine mammals in Malaysia. As always, we brought along our staple activities to SEA LIFE Malaysia – the marine mammal gallery, mini marine laboratory, the unique 'Be A Dolphin Researcher' experience corner, cetacean skull display, an interactive marine mammal sound board, an inventive installation made from upcycled marine debris, and of course, the ever-popular fishing game. This time, we also introduced a new recycling game, where students learned about different types of plastics (such as PET, PP, HDPE, etc.) and sorted them into the correct bins, which helped raise awareness about plastic pollution and proper waste management.

During one of our field surveys in Langkawi in 2024, our team members, Sherlynn and Jasmine, attended to a dead stranded dolphin. The dolphin had drowned due to a longline fishing rope (locally known as pukat rawai) wrapped tightly around its caudal peduncle, which weighed it down severely. We collected the rope so we could show people the harsh reality of how human activities impact marine life. While the ocean provides for both humans and dolphins, it can also be a dangerous place for them if we're not mindful of our actions. Hence, we took the pukat rawai home and incorporated it into our WoW display to serve as a powerful reminder and reality check for all.

Whenever students saw the pukat rawai at our display, they would curiously ask, "What's this?" – and that was our moment to share with them the reality: a dolphin had been found entangled and died due to this very rope. These incidents happen more often than we realize, simply because we aren't careful enough. Marine life deserves to thrive in a safe environment, and we hope that seeing this firsthand sparked something in the students – curiosity, concern, or maybe even the inspiration to become future marine biologists and conservationists.

This final round of the WoW nationwide tour was especially meaningful, and we gave it our all. We hoped WoW not only raised awareness and understanding of Malaysia's marine mammals and ecosystems but also inspired a deeper appreciation and commitment among the younger generation to protect our ocean.

The success of WoW was possible due to the generous financial support from Yayasan Sime Darby, the in-kind contributions from each school that we visited, and also SEA LIFE Malaysia.

Thank you!

## WOW TESTIMONIES

"Hi Jasmine, of course, I still remember! The Whales On-The-Wheels program was very interesting and beneficial for the students. They were so excited to learn about marine mammals in an interactive way. Thank you to MareCet for bringing this unique learning experience to SSeMJ!"

**- TEACHER MAZ, TEACHER, SEKOLAH SENI MALAYSIA JOHOR, MASAI, JOHOR / (TRANSLATED FROM BAHASA MELAYU)**

"Hello Jasmine, I want to express on behalf of my organisation, our gratitude and high appreciation for MareCet's involvement in the program yesterday.

The program is very impactful to our audience as they learnt a lot about marine mammal conservation and have a renewed spirit in protecting our oceans.

Hopefully this collaboration can be continued for many years to come as we look forward to working with you guys again soon. Once again, thank you!"

**- FIKRI, EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT SUPERVISOR, SEA LIFE MALAYSIA**

"15 years after graduating from marine science, I'm volunteering with MareCet Marine Mammal Research & Conservation for their Whales On-The-Wheels marine education tour. It felt so good to talk about the things I love to children because I strongly believe that conservation starts with education. "We don't inherit the earth, we borrow it from our children."

**- PEI XUAN LEE, VOLUNTEER**

"It has been a very enjoyable and enriching experience to volunteer for the Whales On-The-Wheels program with MareCet. Being able to communicate with school kids regarding marine conservation and marine mammals awareness in Malaysia, and to see how curious they are regarding the ecosystem is really rewarding."

**- IRDINA TASNIM, VOLUNTEER**

"The team was fun and laid-back to volunteer with. I enjoyed connecting with the students and gaining a deeper understanding of MareCet's work."

**- SUNISSA, VOLUNTEER**

## JUNE-JULY 2024 NEGERI SEMBILAN, MELAKA, JOHOR

1. SK Port Dickson
2. SK Labu
3. SK Kemendor
4. SMK Seri Pengkalan
5. SJKC Poh Lan
6. SJKT Ladang Lanadron
7. SEALIFE Malaysia
8. SK Seri Intan
9. SK Temenggong Ibrahim Penggaram
10. Sekolah Seni Malaysia Johor
11. SK Teluk Kerang
12. SMK Pasir Panjang

## NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2024 PERAK, PENANG, KEDAH, PERLIS

1. SK Bendang Siam
2. SK Juru
3. SMK Kampung Kastam
4. SK Titi Teras
5. SK Methodist Perempuan
6. SK Kota Kuala Muda
7. SK Darul Aman
8. SK Sungai Baru
9. SJKC Padang Besar Utara
10. SK Stella Maris
11. SMS Pokok Sena
12. SMK Lunas
13. SK Raja Perempuan
14. SK Kampung Dato Seri Kamaruddin
15. SJKT Barathi





# A FILM FOR THE ISLANDERS, BY THE ISLANDERS



In 2024, MareCet embarked on a unique project; one that was new and very different to anything we have ever done. A participatory video project! Participatory video or PV is an approach used whereby the community gets involved in the shaping and making of the film. We wanted to create a film that would be meaningful to the community and be able to reach a wide audience. We went in for a recce, gauging interest for the workshops we would be conducting, and whilst first met with some hesitant responses, we were able to entice a few community members with the promise of stardom (aka acting in the films)! Throughout the process, we worked with Dain Said and Nandita Solomon from local film production company Apparatus, and Fairuz Sulaiman from Sekolah Main Wayang, who helped us bring the show to life.

The first round of workshops started with a screening of two films to showcase the importance of storytelling in conveying conservation messages. This was followed by a sharing session the next day with the island community, on the research work that MareCet conducts.



The following months saw us conducting workshops with the community to understand their shared likes and dislikes about their life on the island, shared values and challenges, and how they viewed their island. Essentially, we hoped

the film would be one that reflected the everyday life of the community as well as the island that they call home. The workshop participants dived straight into theme and character development, and they created a storyline from everyone's brainstorming sessions. Next was role allocation and dividing up tasks. A passionate discussion was also had on what the title of the film should be, and after a voting round of the suggestions made, it was decided! The film would be called *Cara Pulau Kita* (Our Island, Our Way)! Such an apt name for the film.



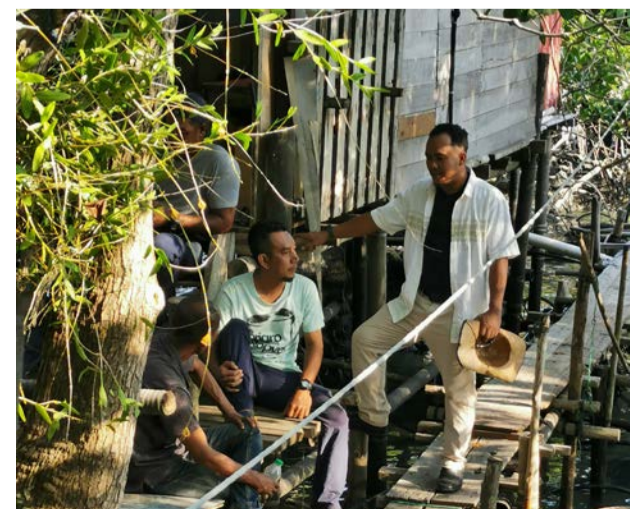
In the midst of all this, the production and film crew also took time to interview some of the islanders to get a deeper glimpse into the stories of the locals and their island home. The MareCet team were also interviewed and filmed as they carried out their research work. All this would be used to put together a second film; a more documentary styled video that showcased the dugongs, Sibu Island, and MareCet's conservation work on the island. This one was titled 'Dugong Tears & Sea Stories of Pulau Sibu'.

As the dates for filming drew closer and closer, the islanders upped their efforts, doing scene read throughs and preparing their own costumes for the shooting. Film day arrived, and in a short two-day filming sprint, the participants went all out with their acting skills; you would have thought they had done this before!

Once editing was done, we were keen to show the islanders the product of their hard work, and held a film screening event on the island in September. Complete with a photobooth and dinner for all, the screening was a huge success with close to 100 community members joining us to watch the short films that had been made. There were cheers and laughs all throughout the night, as they watched each other act out the very scenes they had written together.

This experience was truly a remarkable one; one that left us feeling proud not only of the islanders and all the effort they had put into these film projects, but also of all the work MareCet has been able to do thus far. Before embarking on the project, we weren't quite sure what the outcome would look like, but with everyone's cooperation, it superseded all our expectations. We had always hoped for a film that not only showcased the island's charm and the many characters that live on it, but one that also highlighted the importance of long-term conservation work together with the local stewards that call the island home.

'[Cara Pulau Kita](#)' and '[Dugong Tears & Sea Stories of Pulau Sibu](#)' are both available to watch on MareCet's Youtube channel; [MareCet TV](#).





# FREEDOM FILMFEST

Before the films were officially put out into the world, MareCet had the opportunity to attend a networking event at the 2024 FreedomFilmFest in Kuala Lumpur, to be part of a panel discussion on using films to raise awareness on social concerns. We gave our newly gained insight on the topic, discussing our experience working on the community film project together with the islanders to produce *Cara Pulau Kita (Our Island, Our Way)*.

We discussed the filming processes, and the effectiveness of participatory video in conveying conservation messages. We even got to play a short teaser clip for the attendees to garner excitement for the film! The event was a great opportunity to meet with other like-minded storytellers, film makers, and NGOs using film to tell stories.



## PUTTING AN EAR INTO THE DATAI BAY

As part of The Datai Pledge partnership, MareCet embarked on an exciting initiative to better understand the underwater soundscapes of Datai Bay – the seat of Malaysia’s geological birth dating back 550 million years. In early 2024, the team deployed an acoustic device, the SoundTrap ST600HF (Ocean Instruments, New Zealand). This device will continuously record underwater sounds, capturing the calls of dolphins and porpoises, boat noise, and other marine life activities that occur in the bay.

As far as we know, this marks a groundbreaking effort—the first of its kind in Peninsular Malaysia. Since marine mammals rely on sound to navigate and communicate, long-term monitoring will provide crucial insights into how underwater noise affects their wellbeing and also how and when these animals are in the bay. The findings will help shape future conservation efforts to protect Langkawī’s marine life and could serve as a model for similar studies across the country and Southeast Asia.

Stay tuned as we dive deeper into this exciting project!





# DOLPHIN NECROPSIES

The year 2024 was a significant year for marine mammal stranding events. MareCet recorded 17 strandings, including six finless porpoises, two Irrawaddy dolphins, three Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, and six dugongs. Our team was present at every reported stranding, ensuring that vital data and biological samples were collected for ongoing research and conservation efforts. In a few cases, we successfully conducted necropsies, allowing us to gain deeper insights into the health and threats faced by these marine mammals.

One particularly significant case in January 2024 involved a stranded finless porpoise. With technical support from Dr. Lee Shuang, DVM, a MareCet Perak Dolphin Research volunteer at the time, a necropsy was conducted to examine the carcass. Unfortunately, the specimen was in an advanced state of decomposition (stranding code 4), making it difficult to determine the exact cause of death. However, we discovered a

rope intertwined with part of the porpoise's colon, which had necrotized and become fragile. While the findings were inconclusive, they raised concerns about potential entanglement-related injuries in marine mammals. As part of our commitment to capacity-building, MareCet collaborated with the Zoologico Club of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to organize a two-day Marine Mammal Veterinary Care Workshop in January 2024. The first day featured a lecture by Dr. Sandy Ling Choo (DVM, MS), a veterinarian with specialized knowledge in marine mammals, covering the topics of marine mammal anatomy, physiology, stranding response, and veterinary care. On the second day, Dr. Sandy Ling Choo and Dr. Navaneetha Roopan (DVM) led a necropsy demonstration, guiding students through hands-on necropsy procedures and techniques. A total of 35 veterinary science students from UPM participated, gaining valuable practical experience in February 2023, and an Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin foetus discovered within its deceased mother that stranded in Kuala Sangga, Perak, in January 2017. Under expert supervision, students conducted post-mortem examinations on two dolphin carcasses—an Irrawaddy dolphin neonate found dead at sea during our survey at Tanjung Dawai, Kedah, in February 2023, and an

Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin foetus discovered within its deceased mother that stranded in Kuala Sangga, Perak, in January 2017. Although the carcasses were too decomposed to determine the precise causes of death, the necropsy provided a unique and invaluable learning experience. The students gained hands-on exposure to marine mammal anatomy, pathology, and necropsy techniques, better equipping them for future contributions to marine mammal conservation.

Conducting necropsies is essential for advancing marine mammal conservation. These post-mortem examinations help researchers uncover potential threats to marine species, from disease outbreaks to environmental hazards and human-related impacts. The data gathered can contribute to the development of conservation strategies, informing policymakers and conservationists on necessary protective measures. Moving forward, MareCet remains committed to enhancing our capacity for stranding response and veterinary investigations, working towards a future where marine mammals receive the protection and care they deserve.





From Land to Sea: Efforts in Wildlife and Marine Mammal Conservation, with the International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA)

# STRANDING WORKSHOPS

## Strengthening Marine Mammal Stranding Response in Malaysia

Throughout 2024, MareCet conducted a series of stranding response workshops to equip diverse stakeholders—including veterinary students, fishers, resort operators and conservationists—with the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to marine mammal strandings. These workshops not only enhanced local capacity but also strengthened partnerships, contributing to broader marine mammal conservation efforts across Malaysia.

### Engaging the Veterinary Community

On 7 September, MareCet participated in the Aquatic Seminar 2024: Aquatic Allies, hosted by the Marine Wildlife Veterinary Network (MWVN) at Aquaria KLCC. Dr. Vivian shared insights on MareCet's ongoing marine mammal research and conservation initiatives, while Chris facilitated a mini-training session on first-response procedures for stranded marine mammals. This seminar fostered connections with veterinarians eager to contribute to Malaysia's marine mammal stranding response network.

Later in the month, on 26 September, MareCet facilitated a session at International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA) Malaysia's From Land to Sea: Efforts in Wildlife and Marine Mammal Conservation workshop. Facilitators Sher Lynn and Dhivya introduced participants to Malaysia's marine mammals and conducted hands-on training in emergency response procedures. Veterinary students engaged in role-playing exercises simulating live and dead stranding scenarios, gaining invaluable practical experience in marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation.



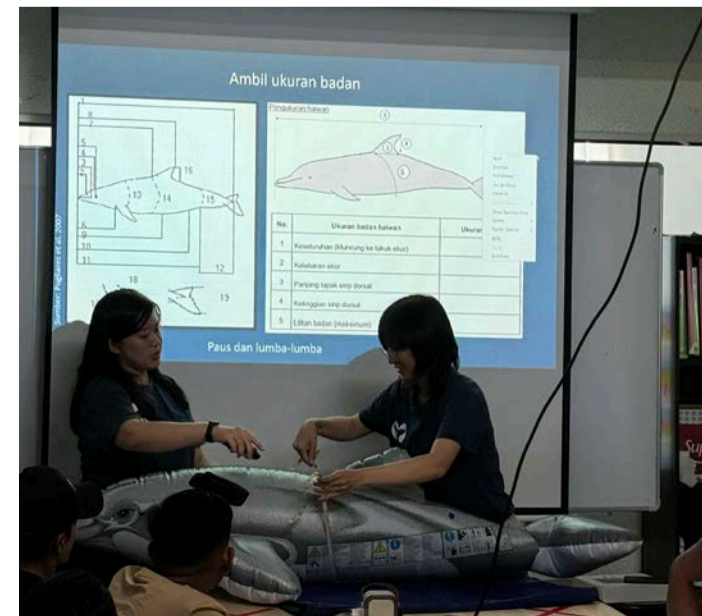
### Empowering Coastal Fishing Communities

Understanding the crucial role of fishers in marine conservation, MareCet collaborated with the Department of Fisheries Malaysia and local fishers' associations in Perak to conduct two Marine Mammal Stranding Response and Safe Release Workshops. The first workshop, held on 20 February at Persatuan Nelayan Kawasan Matang, and the second on 25 September at Persatuan Nelayan Kawasan Kerian, collectively engaged 129 participants—primarily fishers. These workshops, supported by Yayasan Hasanah and the Ministry of Finance Malaysia, focused on educating fishers about proper stranding response procedures and safe release techniques for small cetaceans caught in fishing nets.



### A Year of Impact and Collaboration

Through these workshops, MareCet has significantly expanded the network of individuals trained to handle marine mammal strandings in Peninsular Malaysia, from veterinary students to local fishers. We extend our deepest gratitude to all our collaborators, trainers, and participants who contributed to making these workshops a success. As we continue our mission to protect marine mammals in Malaysia, we look forward to more opportunities to train and engage with diverse stakeholders in the future.





# LOOKING AT DNA FOR CLUES

## Embarking on a genetic journey of discovering marine mammals

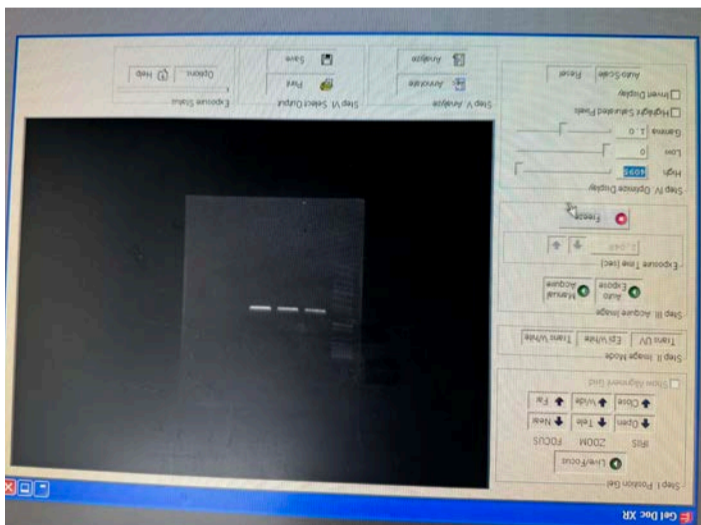
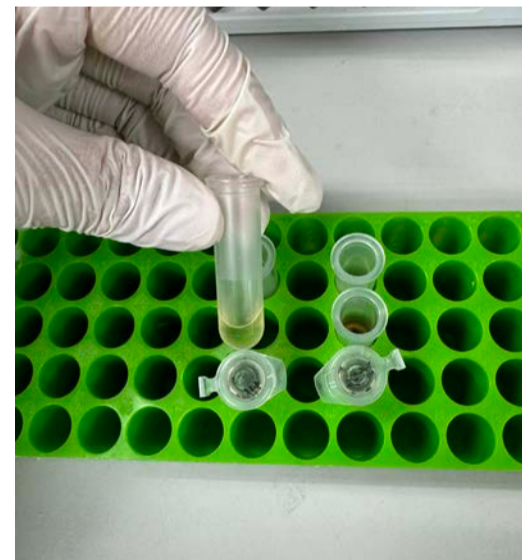
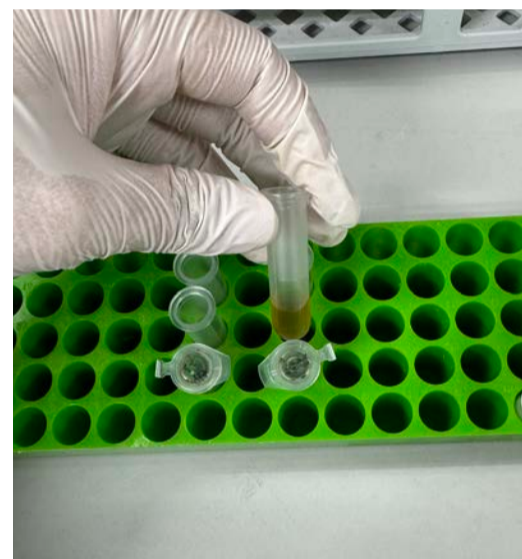
At MareCet, we are constantly working to deepen our understanding of Malaysia's marine mammals, and genetics plays a crucial role in this effort. Having collected many tissue samples from dead cetaceans and dugongs in Malaysia over the years, and after years of harbouring the dream and intention of having our very own genetics programme, 2024 was finally it. Our team had the opportunity to meet with taxonomists and geneticists Dr. Abe Woo Sau Pinn and Dr. Lau Nyok Sean from Universiti Sains Malaysia, to form collaborative efforts for genetic research on marine mammals. These discussions have been invaluable in refining our research direction and strengthening our approach to studying the animals' genetic diversity.

Our Research Assistant, Chris, has traveled to Penang for specialized training in molecular techniques. This hands-on experience was crucial in equipping her with the skills needed to extract, analyze, and interpret genetic data effectively.

One of the key aspects of our work involves collecting skin tissue samples from bycaught or stranded marine mammals. These samples provide a wealth of genetic information, allowing us to study the animals' population structures and genetic diversity.

We are thrilled to share that we have successfully extracted DNA from some of these tissue samples and, through PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction), managed to amplify and sequence the genetic material. This success marks an important step in our conservation efforts, as genetic data can reveal critical insights into species connectivity, inbreeding risks, and overall population health.

We hope to use these findings to support conservation strategies and better protect Malaysia's marine mammals. Stay tuned for more updates as we uncover the fascinating genetic stories hidden within our local seas!





# G'DAY MATE! SOCIETY OF MARINE MAMMALOGY CONFERENCE

The MareCet team attended the 25th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, hosted by the Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM) in Perth, Australia, from 9-15 November 2024. This was our biggest conference representation yet, and it was an incredible experience filled with learning, sharing, and reconnecting with the global marine mammal research community!

## A Powerful Start to the Conference

Before the official start of the conference, our Executive Director, Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam, screened MareCet's new documentary, 'Dugong Tears & Sea Stories of Pulau Sibü', at the 10th International Sirenian Symposium. The film received lots of praise from sirenian researchers worldwide, emphasizing the importance of storytelling in marine conservation.

The conference itself began with a traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremony, a meaningful gesture by the traditional owners of Boorloo (Perth) in Whadjuk country. This ceremony called upon ancestral spirits to provide a safe passage for all delegates as we gathered on their sacred land. It was truly an eye-opening ceremony for the MareCet team.

The opening keynote, Aboriginal Symbiotic Relationships with Dolphin and Whale Kin, was a thought-provoking and inspiring session. Dr. Jodi Edwards (University of Wollongong), an Aboriginal Walbanja woman from Yuin Nation, performed and spoke about mamong (humpback whales) and their deep cultural connection to her people. This was followed by Dr. Chels Marshall (University of Tasmania), an Aboriginal Gumbaynggirr Jagun from the Baga Baga/Ngambaa Nation, who emphasized the significance of cetaceans in Aboriginal culture and the need for harmonious coexistence with nature.

## MareCet's Contributions

During the conference, our team had the exciting opportunity to showcase six different research presentations:

- Dr. Vivian Kuit (Scientific Officer) presented a speed talk on our bycatch mitigation trials in Perak.
- Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam delivered a speed talk on our Eden's (Bryde's) whale research in Kedah.
- Sher Lynn (Programme & Operations Manager) shared insights on our signature Whales On-The-Wheels outreach programme.
- Dr. Saliza Bono (Bioacoustics Officer) and Sandra Teoh (Council Member) presented posters on Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin behaviours in northwestern Peninsular Malaysia.
- Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam was also a co-author on a study about marine mammal strandings in Vietnam, led by Vu Long from the Center for Biodiversity Conservation and Endangered Species.
- Sandra, Dr. Vivian, and Dr. Louisa also co-authored a presentation on a global taxonomic study of Irrawaddy dolphins, led by Dr. Michael McGowen of the Smithsonian Institution.

This conference was also a perfect occasion for the Southeast Asian Marine Mammal (SEA-MAMAS) researcher community to reunite after several years. It was a joy to support each other, share meals, exchange ideas, and celebrate our collective efforts in marine mammal conservation.

## A Proud Moment for MareCet: Sandra Teoh Wins Best Student Presentation Award!

On the last day of the conference, during the closing ceremony, we received great news! One of our Council Members, Sandra Teoh, won First Place for the Best Student Presentation Award for the Asian Region!

Sandra, who is currently pursuing her PhD under Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam, co-supervised by Dr. Amy Then from Universiti Malaya, impressed the judges with her poster presentation titled: "Daylight Behaviour Budget of Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins (*Sousa chinensis*) within the Satun-Langkawi Important Marine Mammal Area, Malaysia."

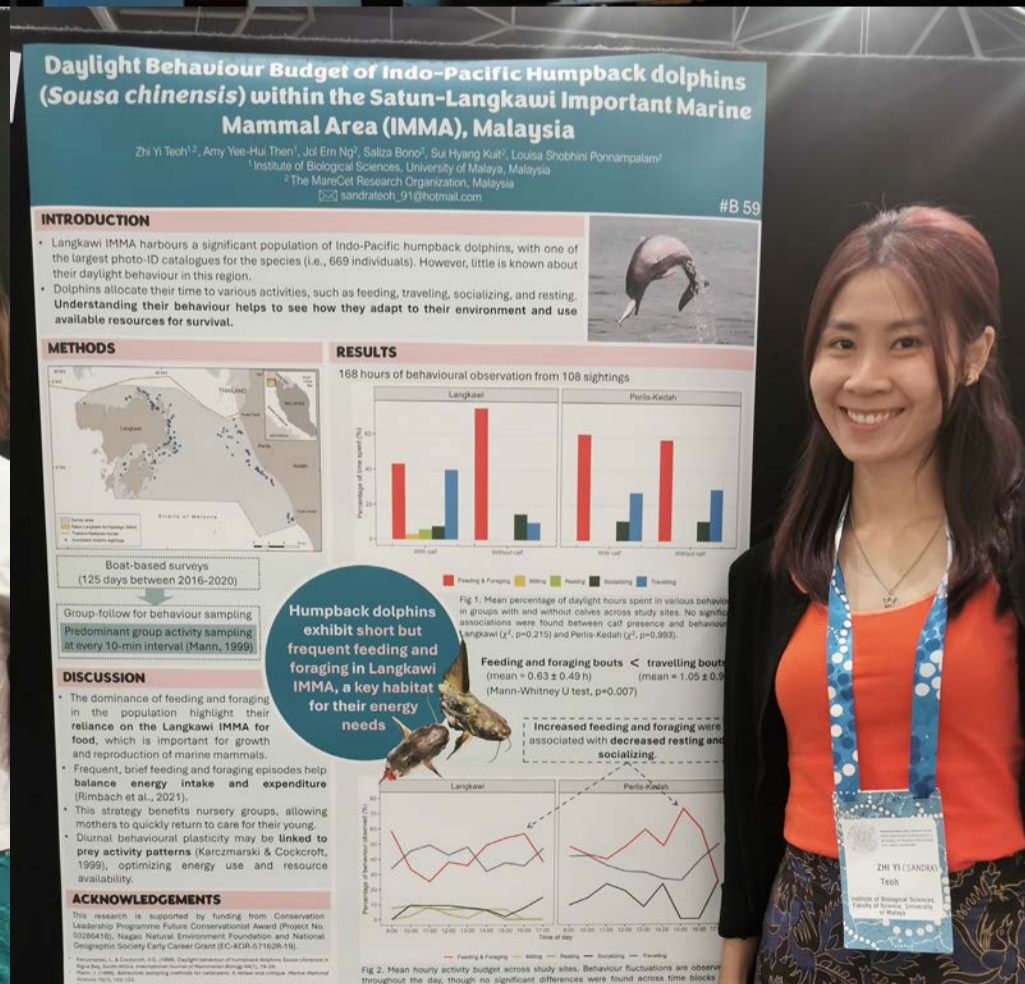
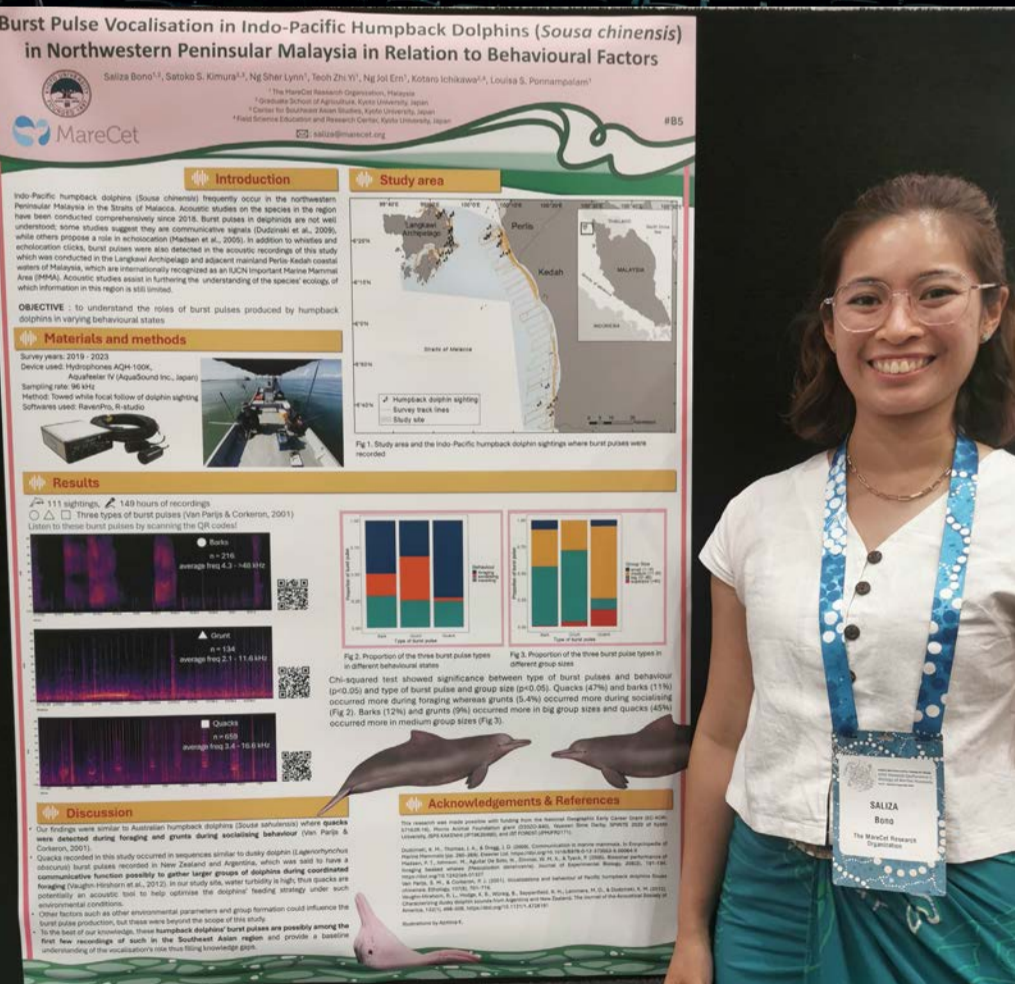
When her name was announced, Sandra was surprised (in a good way!) and we could barely contain our excitement—cheering, jumping, and celebrating this well-deserved achievement!

## A Special Tradition Continues!

What makes this win even sweeter is that five years ago, at the 2019 World Marine Mammal Conference in Barcelona, Spain, Dr. Vivian Kuit—who was also Dr. Louisa's PhD student at the time and is now MareCet's Scientific Officer—won the very same award! It's incredible to see this legacy continue, showcasing the outstanding research emerging from our team, and perhaps also a testament to Dr. Louisa's quality mentorship for her mentees. A huge thank you to the Society for Marine Mammalogy and CLP Alumni Grant for awarding Sandra a student travel grant, and to St Andrews Innovation/SMRU Consulting Inc. for their funding support for Dr. Vivian, which helped ease our financial burden in attending this impactful event.

With all the lessons learned at this conference, we look forward to what's next, and to hopefully attend the next one in Puerto Rico in 2026.







# MAJALAH 3 FEATURE



## Surfing onto National TV with TV3

MareCet was featured in TV3 Malaysia's long-running Majalah 3 documentary episode titled "Peluncur Samudera" (Ocean Surfers)!

As one of Malaysia's leading television channels, TV3 Malaysia produces Majalah 3, a renowned documentary series that explores in-depth stories on various topics such as nature, science, culture, and current affairs. In fact, this is a programme that Dr Louisa grew up watching in the 90's, so the feature was like television coming to life for her.

This hour-long feature, dedicated to dolphins, highlights our research and conservation efforts on Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins around the Langkawi Archipelago, our work with local fishers

in Perak to reduce dolphin bycatch (accidental entanglement in fishing gear), and our marine outreach and education initiatives with local communities.

The spotlight in this documentary was shared with the Department of Fisheries Malaysia.

A heartfelt thank you to TV3 Malaysia for bringing our work to the attention of Malaysians and raising the awareness of marine mammal conservation!

Watch the full documentary episode on YouTube [here](#).



# EURONEWS FEATURE



We're thrilled to share that our work was featured in a Euronews brief documentary in May 2024!

This short video highlights MareCet's ongoing research and conservation efforts to protect Malaysia's marine mammals.

Dive in with Dr. Vivian and Dr. Saliza as they take viewers through our studies on cetaceans in Perak and beyond.

Learn how our team is using innovative methods, such as underwater sound recordings, to better understand these incredible marine creatures.

Watch the full video [here](#).



# TALKS

Giving public talks is an essential part of MareCet's outreach efforts every year. Such talks help raise public awareness and enable our team to connect with society at large.

In 2024, our team members gave a few public talks around the Klang Valley and also in Langkawi. These were:

✦ **AQUATIC SEMINAR 2024: AQUATIC ALLIES, HOSTED BY THE MARINE WILDLIFE VETERINARY NETWORK (MUVN) AT AQUARIA KLCC**

✦ **INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (IVSA) MALAYSIA'S FROM LAND TO SEA: EFFORTS IN WILDLIFE AND MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION WORKSHOP IN LANGKAWI, KEDAH**

✦ **MARINE MAMMALS IN MALAYSIA, DURING MCDERMOTT ASIA-PACIFIC'S WORLD OCEAN DAY CELEBRATION IN KUALA LUMPUR**

✦ **DEEP DIVE DIALOGUE WITH MARECET, WITH MRSM LANGKAWI IN LANGKAWI, KEDAH**



# EVENTS

## MareCet's Endorsement of Aquatopia – Final Year Project by Dasein Academy of Art

MareCet was invited to endorse Aquatopia, a Final Year Project (FYP) by students from the Dasein Academy of Art, Digital Media Program, Batch 21. Led by Estella Loh (Event Manager) and Chewvy Lau (Event Coordinator), the project culminated in a two-week exhibition held at Dasein Academy.

Driven by their passion for technology and environmental conservation, the students designed an interactive exhibition that harnesses digital innovation to address pressing environmental challenges from a dynamic perspective. The exhibition included exciting items such as 2D motion graphics and naked-eye 3D animations. Through these cutting-edge approaches, Aquatopia aimed to educate, inspire action, and promote environmental responsibility in a way that resonates with today's digital era.



## Mersing International Conservation Day 2024

MareCet was proud to be part of the Mersing International Conservation Day (MICD) 2024, an event that integrated environmental awareness and sustainable tourism. This event was organized in collaboration with the Mersing District Council, Tengah Island Conservation, Mersing Tourism Association, and Mersing Youth Council under the Sustainable Travel Mersing initiative.

Held at the Mersing Harbour Centre, the event attracted more than 400 visitors, including many locals and tourists who were eager to learn about conservation efforts in Mersing and their impacts on local tourism. Our team traveled to Mersing to set up a booth, engaging with visitors and sharing insights about marine conservation.

Fascinatingly, many locals were still in denial about the presence of dugongs in Mersing! While they were aware of their existence, they were utterly shocked to learn more about these elusive marine mammals. Our booth also drew great interest from many school students, who were excited to explore marine conservation topics and participate in the day's activities.



## Booth at Sunway University for Local Actions for Global Goals 2024

MareCet participated in the Local Action for Global Goals 2024 event at Sunway University from 23 - 25 September 2024. With an estimated 22,000 visitors, including students from primary and secondary schools, senior citizens, and the general public, the event provided a fantastic opportunity for MareCet to engage with a diverse audience. It was also an excellent platform to promote our volunteering programs and excursions, particularly among Sunway University students interested in marine conservation efforts.

Throughout the event, we connected with visitors, shared insights about our work, and inspired more people to take action for our ocean. Thank you to everyone who visited our booth and supported our mission!



MINISTRY OF FINANCE

# THANK YOU

## to Our Supporters & Donors!

MareCet has been able to achieve all it has through the generous support and contributions from a long list of supporters. Big or small, monetary or in-kind, each contribution is vital to the continuation of our work, and we are able to go the extra nautical-mile because of it!

A huge TERIMA KASIH / THANK YOU / நன்றி / 谢谢 to all who have been so generous with us this 2024.

# YAYASAN HASANAH

A foundation of Khazanah Nasional

## THE DATAI

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YAYASAN



Wildlife Conservation Network



MIRACLE SPECTRUM

TOGETHER, WE MAKE IT BETTER

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 Xiangrui Li  
 Hwan Lin Pok  
 James Hampson  
 Yousuf Memon  
 Kyle James Agpalo

# INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS

It takes a village to do the work that we do, and MareCet is able to do so much thanks to our loyal volunteers and interns! We are beyond grateful for all the time and effort everyone contributed in the year of 2024.

We would like to extend our sea of thanks to the following individuals:

Chris Ee Jia Wen  
Jean ChuaJing Er  
Felecity Yap  
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Lim Yu Sheng  
Nguyen Hoang Thien (CBES)  
Nguyen Trong Duc (CBES)  
Wong Soon Wei  
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Lee Joey  
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Aslam Zamani  
Azalea Yee Luan Ser  
Kate Patricia Morrison  
Khalida Adeeba  
Janice Lai Yi Wen  
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Arthitaya Sima-Aree  
Nor Nadia Abdullah Marzuki

Aina Firzanah  
Kirtisha Sivadas  
Anis Mardiana Mohammad  
Noor Shamsy  
Latiffa Aini binti Abd Latip  
Nurul Aqeela  
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Tan Yon Lynn  
Ahmed Bin Shaqeel Ahmed  
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Tan Chiew Mei  
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Pricillia Yoong Zhe  
Ng Sherwin  
Preethika a/p Vasudiwan  
Low Choon Chyuan  
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Nur Aliah Eleena bt. Abdul Hakam  
Lee Si Lin  
Janis Khor Xin Rou  
Nathan Nop  
Abdulrahman Badreddin Shai-bani  
Rehnesah Parameswaran  
Chow Mei Mei  
Ng Wan Suan  
Foo Mei Ling  
Simon Lee Wei Peng  
Kanta Fujishima  
Ong Wei Yan

Melvern Goh Keat Heng  
Muhammad Fikri bin Burhanuddin  
Cynthia Mahadi  
Mirashini Tiagu  
Nazira binti Baharom  
Nur Awadah binti Muhammad Nor  
Nurul Yusma Aini binti Yusoff  
Yoga Sri Kalaivani Kalaichelvan  
María Marcos Vicente  
Kevinraj A/L Nagaraju  
Haziq  
Lee Pei Xuan  
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Dhorifah binti Zainuddin  
Nurqistina Safea  
Elisha Sathyanesan Eliezer  
Ooi Qiao Jun  
Ahmad Fahmi bin Radzi



# In Memory of Mohd Zuwairi bin Yahya (Abang Herry)

It is with deep sadness that we remember and honour the life of our esteemed boat skipper in Sri Manjung, Perak, Mohd Zuwairi bin Yahya, fondly known to many as Abang Herry. He was a cherished member of the MareCet family, especially among our Perak Dolphin Research team, who had the privilege of working alongside him during field surveys.

With his exceptional boat-handling skills, Abang Herry always ensured our safe return, even through challenging sea conditions around Pulau Pangkor and Pulau Sembilan.

Beyond his role as a skipper, he was a dear friend and mentor to our team, sharing countless moments of camaraderie—whether over meals with his family after long survey days, exchanging life stories and laughter onboard, or simply enjoying the small joys of snacks and games while waiting out the weather.

He once expressed, “Saya sangat bangga bekerja dengan MareCet” (“I’m so proud to be working with MareCet”), but in truth, it was an honour for us to work with such a dedicated and remarkable individual. His unwavering enthusiasm, his ever-present smile, and his signature cheerful “Okay!” in response to our requests will always be remembered with fondness.

Abang Herry, you will always be in our hearts. Thank you for everything.  
We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones.



# NEW STAFF

## CHRIS EE JIA WEN RESEARCH ASSISTANT



Let us warmly welcome a new member of staff to MareCet!

Hi everyone, I'm Chris. Following on from my internship with MareCet in late 2023 I'm excited to now be part of MareCet as a research assistant, where I assist in outreach events, fieldwork, and data processing to support our marine mammal research. Specifically, my primary focus will be on the genetic studies of marine mammal species in Malaysia

My journey with MareCet has been both exciting and fulfilling. I've always been passionate about marine life, and from a young age, I loved snorkeling and exploring the ocean. However, after enrolling for my marine biology degree and volunteering with MareCet in early 2023, I began to see the ocean differently. The beauty of marine life—coral reefs, sea turtles, and especially the incredible marine mammals—needs protection, and I hope more people will come to recognize its importance.

Looking ahead, I would like to deepen my knowledge of marine mammal genetics and explore how this research can support conservation efforts. I also hope to help share MareCet's work with the public, raising awareness and inspiring action to protect Malaysia's marine biodiversity.



## VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIES

I've done a lot of volunteering programs, and I could say that I've never experienced such a unique volunteering experience like I did with MareCet. You get to learn tonnes of new things outside of the common knowledge you'd get from other volunteering programs, venture to new hidden places along the states, learn to adapt to unexpected situations, eat good food, and overall the experience very much opened my eyes on marine research and their issues. You get to see and experience first-hand how marine researchers conduct their work, and I love how fulfilling it makes you feel as much as it is tiring. As you follow the trip, you'd also get to see and appreciate nature, which I realise most of us take for granted, especially when you live in the city. When I got back after volunteering, I had (and still do) this sense of longing for the work I did with MareCet and the whole experience, especially when all I see around are just tall buildings, malls and sparse forest and manmade gardens.

I miss the sea, the sky, the forests, mountains and hills, the paddy fields, the dolphins, and surprisingly, the staff too. I'd also like to give Saliza and Dhivya their due credits for guiding us all throughout the program. They were very patient with us, they guided us very carefully and also were very fun! I'd very much love to volunteer again regardless of how much the work gets, because seeing MareCet's staff being so passionate in spite of the heavy labour ignites my own spirit in my work. I think a lot of people underestimate the work of NGOs like this and it's good for people to be more exposed to the things you guys do to see that it's not easy, it costs so much and

it's currently sustained only by the passion of the people involved. So, thank you very much MareCet and hope to work with you guys again!

**- AINA FIRZANAH, LDR KEDAH-PERLIS, OCT 2024**

I'm Khoa, a volunteer from CBES in Vietnam participating in the survey in Taiping May 18-25. I am very impressed with the MareCet team. Your team is very professional, enthusiastic and fun. I see your concentration when you work. Willing to guide volunteers and share useful and interesting information to help me understand more about marine mammals. I am happy to accompany you in your survey in Taiping. Although the time was neither short nor long, it left me with many memories. Even though it's difficult in language, you guys have helped me a lot. Thank you to all MareCet members, especially Vivian. See you again soon.

**- KHOA VO HOANG (CBES) - PDR, MAY 2024**

I want to express my heartfelt thanks for your constant guidance towards me. Your guidance has been invaluable to me and thank you so much for always looking out for me and making sure I was doing fine. They really mean so much to me and I truly appreciate every bit of advice you've shared. You guys were so warm and approachable, which has made a huge difference in my journey. I feel comfortable reaching out to you because of your kindness and patience towards me. I'm truly grateful for everything you've done for me. Thanks for always filling my stomach with delicious food and my

heart with beautiful moments. This trip wasn't just beautiful because of the dolphins. IT WAS BECAUSE OF YOU ALL. Thanks again for the great experience if I didn't anything wrong I'm sorry and I really hope to join you all again one day

**- REHNESHAH PARAMESWARAN, PDR, SEPT 2024**

Volunteering for Marecet's whale survey in Langkawi was an unforgettable experience. I went in with no expectations, only to discover the incredible marine life that exists in Malaysian waters—including whales! The survey involved scanning the sea for signs of these elusive creatures, learning how to spot water sprays, dorsal fins, and seabird activity. Some days were full of sightings, while others tested our patience under the scorching sun. One of the highlights was spotting a pod of dolphins, including babies—it was magical. We also encountered the more sobering reality of marine conservation when we found a dead dolphin and assisted in data collection. The work was both physically exhausting and deeply rewarding, giving me a newfound respect for marine researchers.

Beyond the survey, the team made the experience even more memorable. Sherlynn and team ensured we were well taken care of, and I truly appreciated the camaraderie after long days at sea. This was one of the most challenging yet fulfilling things I've ever done, and I'm grateful to Marecet for the opportunity to be part of such meaningful work.

**- NADIA MARZUKI, WHALE PROJECT, SEPTEMBER 2024**

# MOST VOLUNTEERED PERSON



**LEE JOEY**  
**WHALE PROJECT, JUNE 2024**  
**PENANG SURVEY, AUGUST 2024**  
**WHALES ON-THE-WHEELS MARINE EDUCATION PROGRAMME, DECEMBER 2024**

Volunteering with MareCet had been on my bucket list for some time. I feel incredibly lucky to have finally done so in 2024. As an aquatic science student, I didn't even know Malaysia had marine mammals until I came across their work.

I'll never forget my first day volunteering. I wasn't in the best shape in the middle of the day. I was seasick and feeling awful. The team stood in silence, scanning the ocean for any signs of a whale surfacing. Just as I leaned over to vomit, a Bryde's whale breached right in front of me, barely five meters away! Seeing such a close breach instantly made me forget how sick I was. That moment is forever etched in my memory.

Throughout the volunteering period, I've learned so much, from how to conduct marine mammal surveys, identify different species, to recognizing whale blows in the distance. The hands-on experience, volunteering in different aspects and sites deepened my appreciation for the ocean and the incredible work that goes into studying and conserving these fantastic creatures.

MareCet is doing such important work for marine mammal conservation in Malaysia. Beyond that, I love the energy of the team. Everyone is so passionate, supportive, and dedicated to what they do. I'm truly grateful to have been a part of it!

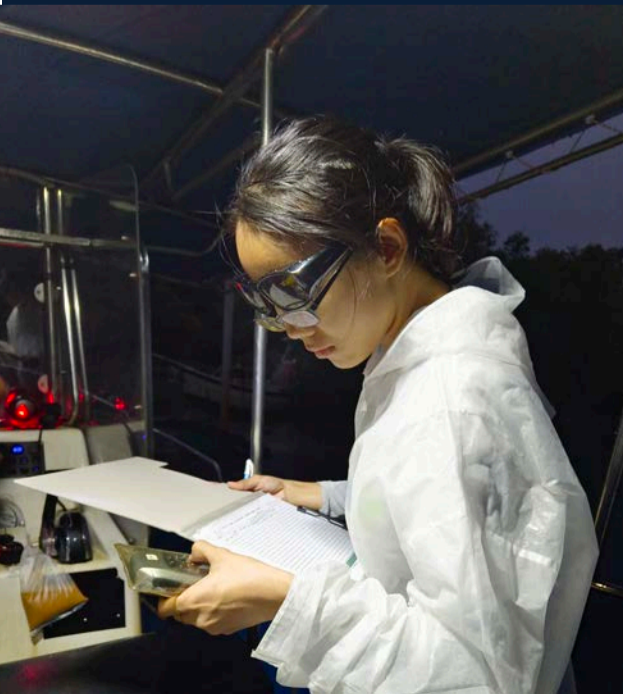
Once again, thank you MareCet for every experience and everything.



## INTERN TESTIMONY

I have a confession to make—before I learned about MareCet, I had no idea there were dolphins in Malaysia! Interning with their Cetacean Bycatch Mitigation Project along the Perak coast was such an eye-opener. The long hours on the boat were tiring, but every cetacean sighting made it 100% worth it. I got to work with local fishers, carrying out interviews about their cetacean encounters and coordinating with them to test mitigation devices. It wasn't just about research—I also got to learn so much about the fishing communities, their culture, and their way of life. The crew was super welcoming and friendly, which made everything even better. Now that my internship has ended, I'll continue making an effort to contribute to marine mammal conservation in Malaysia—starting with telling all my friends and family that yes, Malaysia has dolphins (and whales and porpoises)!

— JASMINE SIA SHU XIN



# LIL' MARECET SHOP

Did you know that The [Lil' MareCet Shop has been on Shopee](#) for years? But that's not all—our merchandise is also available in select outlets across the Klang Valley, Penang Island, and Langkawi Island!

For those who prefer in-store shopping within the Klang Valley, you can find our merchandise and books at Sunda Shelves, while our storybook is also available at Lit Books.

In Penang, you can get our adorable plush toy and storybook at Kommune, a lifestyle retail and F&B brand by The Habitat Group, located at The Habitat Penang Hill.

And if you're in Langkawi, you'll find our merchandise exclusively at The Datai Langkawi. With every purchase there, a portion of the proceeds supports The Datai Pledge, an initiative dedicated to protecting nature, wildlife, and local communities (including us too!)

Of course, if online shopping is your thing, our full merchandise collection is available on Shopee! Every purchase directly supports our marine mammal research and conservation efforts.

For international orders or any merchandise-related inquiries, feel free to reach out to us at [shop@marecet.org](mailto:shop@marecet.org) or drop us a message on WhatsApp at +6018-337 6882.



## STOCKISTS

### Sunda Shelves

32A (first floor), Jalan SS20/10, Damansara Kim, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia  
Opening Hours: 11am - 6pm (Tuesday - Friday), 10am - 7 pm (Saturday & Sunday)  
Phone number: +60 3-7732 6773  
Email: [sundashelves@gmail.com](mailto:sundashelves@gmail.com)

### Lit Books

P-1-11 Tropicana Avenue, 12, Persiaran Tropicana, 47410 Petaling Jaya, Selangor  
Phone number: +603-7886 6988  
Opening Hours: 1pm - 7pm, (Tuesday - Sunday)

### Kommune

The Habitat Cafe and Retail by Kommune  
The Habitat Penang Hill, 11300 Bukit Bendera, Pulau Pinang  
Opening Hours: 9am - 4.30pm (Monday - Sunday)

# IRRAWADDY PLUSH



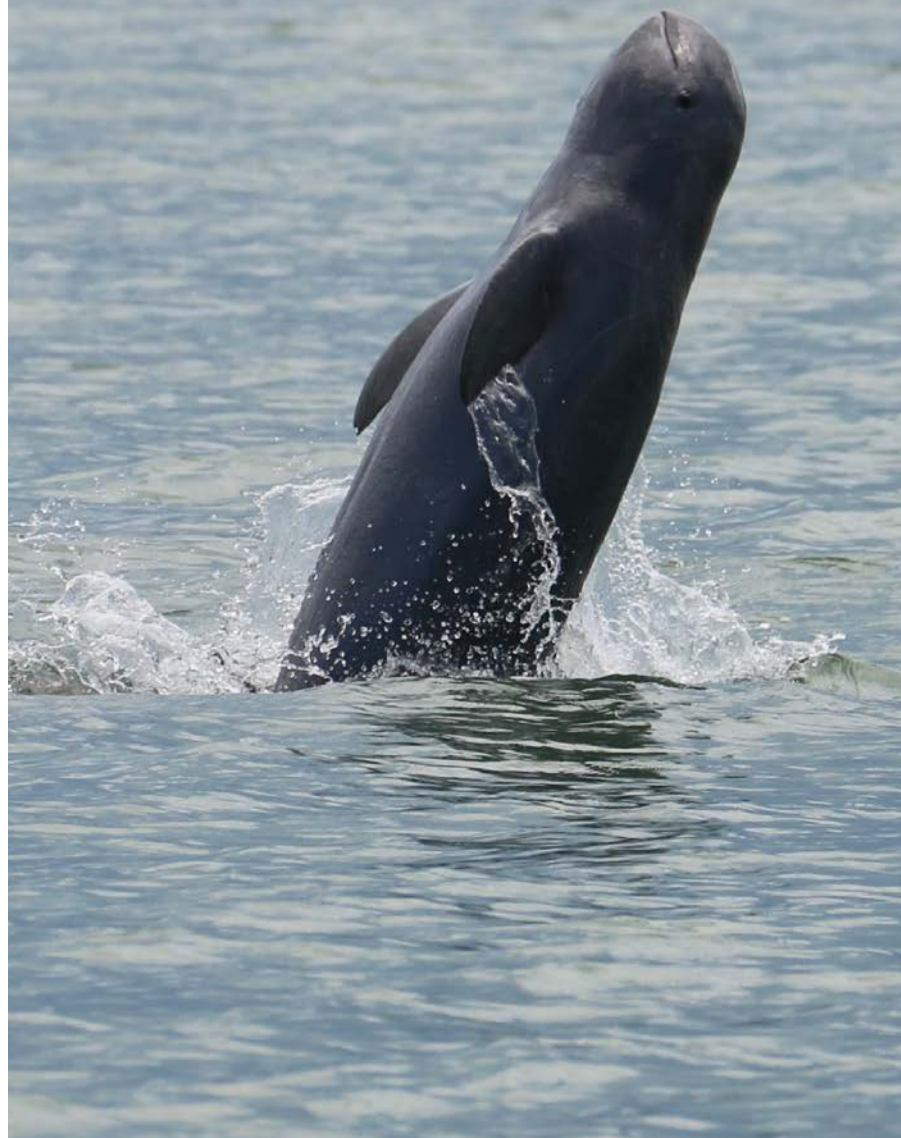
**RM80/-**  
MareCet

## Renewed Merchandise!

### IRRAWADDY PLUSH TOY (FINALLY RESTOCKED!)

Irrawaddy dolphins are found in both freshwater and marine environments in the South and Southeast Asia regions. The Irrawaddy dolphin has a rounded head with no beak and a small stubby dorsal fin, and they are generally shy and evasive. They are one of the common coastal cetacean species found in Malaysian waters. MareCet has been researching and advocating for the conservation of this species in Malaysia since 2013.

TO PURCHASE FROM SHOPEE, CLICK [HERE](#)



YOU WILL LOVE THE OCEAN.  
IT MAKES YOU FEEL SMALL,  
BUT NOT IN A BAD WAY.  
SMALL BECAUSE YOU REALIZE  
YOU'RE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER.

- LAUREN MYRACLE -

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