

# SIGHTINGS!

by



MareCet

Jan 2014: Issue 2

**2013**

**Projects, Events,  
Awards!**



**lil' MareCet shop!**

*Get your new official  
merchandise!*

**2014 PREVIEWS**

*Sneak peek at what's in  
store*

**Matang Dolphin Research**

*Introducing our latest research and  
conservation project!*

## Words from the helm...

Another year has gone and what a year it was! 2013 was filled with many highs and lows, as it is wont to be, but looking back, it was all truly worth it. The year started out with a bang for MareCet with us hosting a group of colleagues from various countries in the Third Southeast Asian Marine Mammal Symposium (SEAMAM III, *see page 11*) to discuss topics ranging from research needs to conservation actions to international collaboration opportunities. SEAMAM III not only brought MareCet closer to other organisations and researchers in the region, but it also brought recognition in the form of an invitation for Louisa to join the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group (*for more of her achievements see page 3*)! This year has also seen a growth in our projects (*see ongoing projects in page 6*) and activities, setting things up for bigger and better things to come in 2014 (*see upcoming activities in page 17*).

Last year, MareCet lost a friend, and with it the world lost one of its most admirable conservation champion (*see page 2*). However, his loss will never be in vain. MareCet continues to strive to further his hope and vision in our own work. We will always look upon his memory to remind us what it means to persevere, to challenge ourselves and others, and to overcome the many challenges we face so we can conserve the fragile environment and species of our chosen field.

As we look back to the year that was, we feel blessed to have received the great support we have had along the way, some from unexpected places. Please know that your belief and support in what we do is one of the main reasons we keep on doing this. We now look on towards 2014, and are excited about the many things that is yet to come. With your continual support, we believe MareCet will grow stronger and be able to make a good difference to this world.

On that note, join us in looking back at the year that has gone by and we look forward to working with all of you in the year (and the many more years) to come! Happy New Year and may this new year bring you the same hope and excitement that it brings us.

In this issue:

In Memoriam.....	2
Family Matters.....	3
Lil' MareCet Shop.....	4
Ongoing Projects.....	6
Blast from the Past.....	11
2014 Sneak Preview.....	17
Publications, presentations and media coverage.....	18
Volunteers Speak Out.....	22



Louisa Ponnampalam, PhD  
Chairperson / Co-founder



Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne  
Vice-Chairperson / Co-founder

## In Memoriam... Choo Chee Kuang

16.11.1977 – 09.06.2013

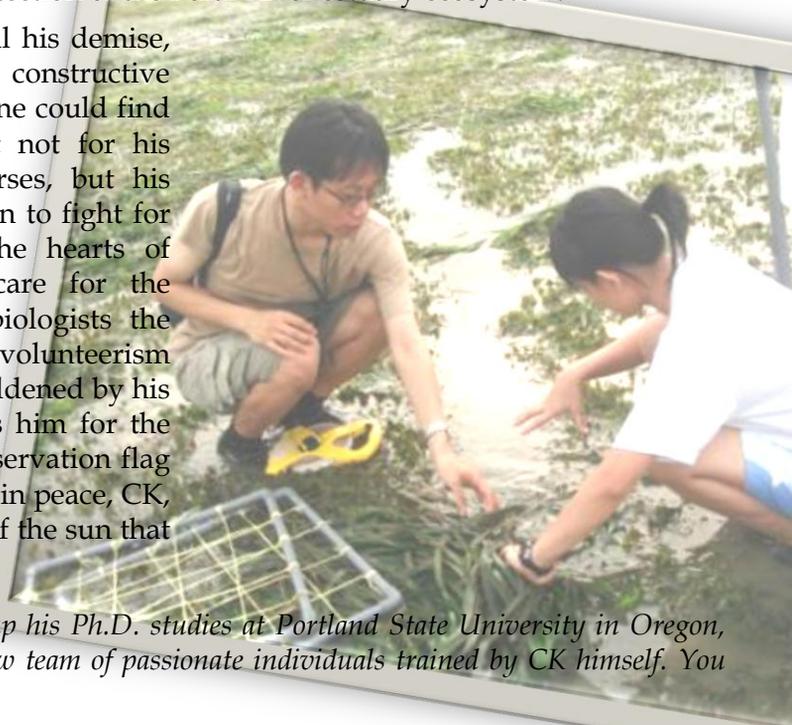


Photo: Roland Tay

The world of marine science and marine conservation grieved for the loss of a comrade in June 2013. His name was Choo Chee Kuang, leader and founder of Save Our Seahorses Malaysia (SOS Malaysia), seahorse scientist, environmentalist, champion of Orang Seletar indigenous rights, and one of the pioneers of marine conservation in Malaysia. After a year-long brave battle with cancer, CK, as he was fondly known, left this earthly realm. In the early 2000s, when nobody was paying any attention to seahorses yet, CK ventured out to various fishing ports and villages in search of information on the charismatic creatures. His searching finally landed him in the Pulai River estuary in Johor, where he found flourishing seagrass meadows that was home to a healthy population of seahorses. His research on seahorses was cross-cutting; he studied their life histories, their behaviour, their morphology, and monitored their numbers through the years.

As large-scale developments began in the area in 2000, CK recognized that the seagrass meadows, seahorses and other marine biodiversity were adversely affected and started to decline. He could not sit back, watch the decay unfold before him and not do anything, and so he set forth on a rugged path of lobbying and advocating for the protection of the Pulai River estuary ecosystem.

CK worked tirelessly for this cause up until his demise, and tried to engage all stakeholders in constructive consultation to find a ground where everyone could find a "sweet spot". We remember him most not for his ingenuity or his deep passion for seahorses, but his strength amidst adversity and determination to fight for conservation. This eco-warrior touched the hearts of many, taught many young minds to care for the environment and gave aspiring marine biologists the chance to hone their ambition through SOS' volunteerism opportunities. We at MareCet are deeply saddened by his absence, but will continue to look towards him for the drive and inspiration to fly the marine conservation flag high and conduct our work effectively! Rest in peace, CK, and may you eternally bask in the warmth of the sun that shines over Sungai Pulai.



*At the time of his passing CCK was finishing up his Ph.D. studies at Portland State University in Oregon, USA. SOS Malaysia is now carried on by a new team of passionate individuals trained by CK himself. You may follow them at [www.sosmalaysia.org](http://www.sosmalaysia.org)*

## Family Matters...

In early 2013, MareCet saw the exit of two of its Council members, Ms. Grace Duraisingham and Ms. Nurul Bariyah Babu. Then in late 2013, our other Council member and former Honorary Treasurer, Ms Reena Raghavan also stepped down. We at MareCet would like to express our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the both of them for their services during their time in Council, and wish them all the best with their future endeavours.

At the 1st Council meeting of 2013, we then welcomed two new members, Mr Daniel Liew and Ms Lalita Gomez. Daniel is a management consultant and coffee guru while Lalita is an ecologist and an environmental consultant. Subsequently at the 2nd Council meeting of 2013, we welcomed yet another two new members, Ms Ng Jol Ern and Ms Vivian Kuit. Both are young and dynamic individuals trained in aquatic and marine sciences, with a deep passion for cetaceans and marine conservation.

## Proud to inform you that... (drum roll)

When one talks about over-achievers, we have no choice but to (proudly) say that our Chairperson, Dr Louisa Ponnampalam, is one! She was a on roll in 2013, getting various international appointments and award nominations. Way to go, Dr P!

At the conclusion of SEAMAM III in March 2013, Louisa was invited to join the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Species Survival Commission's (SSC) Cetacean Specialist Group (CSG). The invitation was extended to her by the group's Chair himself, Dr Randall Reeves. Louisa now joins a group of top cetacean scientists the world over in promoting and facilitating the scientific research and conservation of cetaceans. More on the CSG and current cetacean-related news can be found at <http://www.iucn-csg.org>. Additionally, Louisa was also invited to the IUCN SSC Sirenian Specialist Group (Indian Ocean region), a group similar to the IUCN SSC CSG, but that focuses on the research and conservation of dugongs and manatees.



Louisa was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the International Consortium for Marine Conservation (ICMC) in May 2013 for the 2013-2014 term, after a close vote with her contender, Dr Robert Suydam from the North Slope Borough in Alaska, USA. The ICMC is a newly-formed consortium of international organizations working towards the common goal of marine conservation, and is being led by the well-respected and well-known Dr John E. Reynolds III, Senior Scientist at Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida, USA.

Louisa was also nominated for two prestigious international conservation awards – the 2014 Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation, and the Future for Nature Award 2014. These nominations are very much deserved, and we are all keeping our fingers crossed that Louisa can add a few more feathers to her already full and colourful cap!



Congratulations and WELL DONE!

## New deals in the lil' MareCet shop!

We are pleased to inform you that our lil' MareCet shop has expanded in variety! We now have 3 different t-shirt designs to choose from (one of it is available in children's sizes), some handmade keyrings, sling bags, stickers, iron-on/sew-on patch and an educational poster! Some of our t-shirt designs were inspired by the animals we study. T-shirts were designed by a local designer and certain items were handmade by local volunteers.

### **T-Shirt - Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in mangrove**

(Design inspired by Langkawi's Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins)

Price: RM35 each

Colour: Navy blue & Washed-out grey

Sizes available: Regular fit (XS - XL)

Material: 100% cotton



### **T-Shirt - Dolphin mother-calf pair sketch**

(Design inspired by Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins sighted in Langkawi)

Price: RM40 each

Colour: Light yellow

Sizes available: Ladies fit (S - XL); Regular fit (S - XL)

Material: 100% cotton



### **T-Shirt - Meal time**

(Humpback dolphins chasing fish)

Price: RM40 each

Colour: Soft orange

Sizes available:

Kids fit (S - L); Ladies fit (S - XL); Regular fit (S - XL)

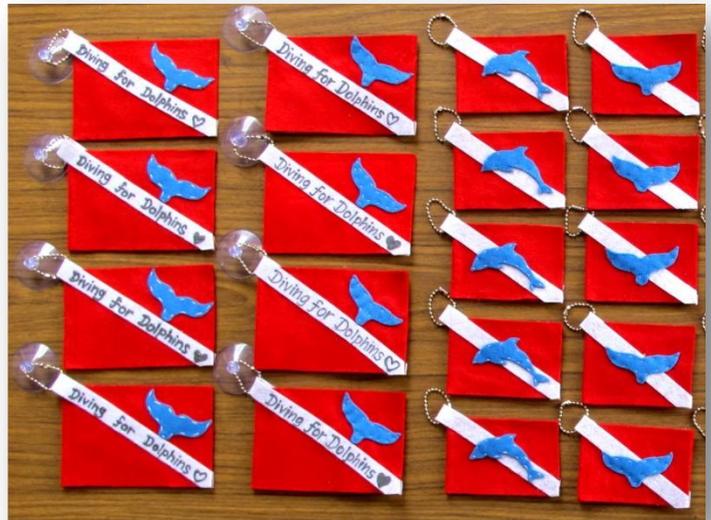
Material: 100% cotton

Designs by Katrina Lisa

## New deals in the lil' MareCet shop!

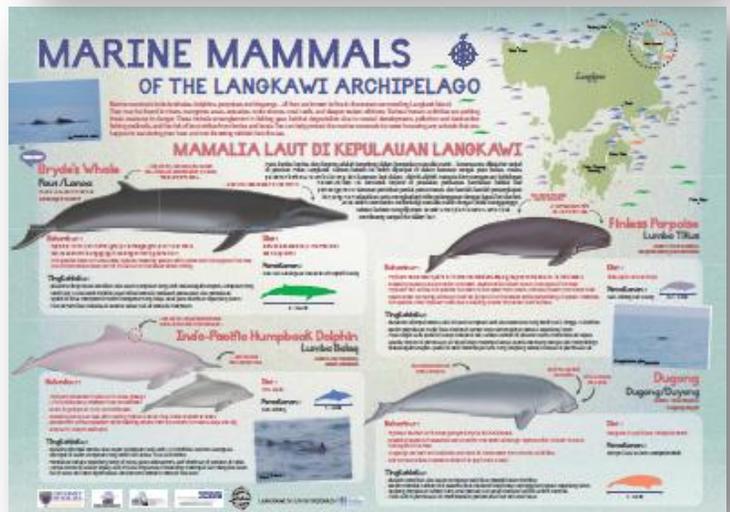
**Handmade "Diving for dolphins" dive flag**  
 Large, with suction hook [removable]  
 Price: RM10 each  
 Material: Felt

**Handmade "Diving for dolphins" dive flag**  
 Small, Leaping dolphin / Whale tail design  
 Price: RM7 each  
 Material: Felt



Designs by Vivian Kuit

**Marine Mammals of the Langkawi Archipelago poster**  
 Price: RM10 each



**Langkawi Dolphin Research sling bag**  
 Price: RM15 each  
 Size: 35cm x 26cm x 6.5cm

**"I pic MareCet" embroidered sew-on/iron-on patch**  
 (Ideal as an add on to your backpack, diving BCD, or whatever you like!)  
 Price: RM10 each



You may make your orders via [ask.marecet@gmail.com](mailto:ask.marecet@gmail.com). Items may be posted to you, or if you are in the Klang Valley region, we would be happy to meet up with you to hand-deliver the items. Payment can be made via bank deposit or in C.O.D. (cash on delivery). All funds raised from merchandise sales will contribute towards MareCet's research and conservation activities.

## Ongoing Projects

### Langkawi Dolphin Research: wraps up! But just for a while...



After running for four years, even before the official formation of MareCet, our Langkawi Dolphin Research is saying, "And that's a wrap!" But worry not, as this hiatus will only be short and temporary. The past year had been rather "quiet" for the project, in a sense that the team did not encounter all too many Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins compared to the other years, and the weather was not particularly kind to us during the surveys. We missed seeing the very large groups of dolphins we had encountered in the previous years, despite searching the entire archipelago vigorously. However, the Indo-Pacific finless porpoises were still encountered frequently as they have been in the previous years too.

The highlight of the project's 2013 was an encounter with a juvenile whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) during the October survey. What a treat! The team was on its way to one of its survey transect lines, when Louisa suddenly noticed something moving through the water. Initially, she'd thought it was a false killer whale, or something with a rounded head, as that's what it looked like. But as the research vessel moved closer to the moving object, she saw white spots against a dark grey background, and immediately



Photo: MareCet

Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) sighted in October 2013.

shouted "WHALE SHARK! WHALE SHARK!" in utter excitement! Turns out, the shark was swimming near the surface of the water and feeding, with its entourage of cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*) and following it everywhere it went. Just as a young kid would, the shark was a curious one and at one point surfaced right beside the research vessel and floated at the surface for a good three minutes before swimming away.



Photo: MareCet

A Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*) surfaces near our survey vessel in 2012.



Photo: MareCet

Whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) feeding at the surface of the water.

During our October 2013 survey, we also hosted two visiting researchers from Thailand's Eastern Marine and Coastal Resources Research Center (Department of Marine and Coastal Resources). Both Ms Chalatih Junchompoo and Ms Natakritapan Pungsamrurn joined our survey to learn about survey methodology and data collection, as well as to exchange information with our team on their research and conservation efforts in the eastern Gulf of Thailand. In early 2013, the project was awarded an in-kind grant from IDEA WILD, a US-based non-profit organization that supports research and conservation projects in developing countries. Thank you IDEA WILD for the laptop and Canon 60D DSLR camera!

As we move into 2014, we will be working up three years' worth of visual data and two years' worth of acoustic data to make an estimation of the number of dolphins and porpoises within our Langkawi survey site, and to decipher their distribution patterns and overlaps with human activities. The results of these will be submitted for publication in international peer-reviewed scientific journals, and also disseminated to relevant government agencies such as the Langkawi Development Authority, Department of Fisheries Malaysia and the Department of Marine Parks Malaysia. We will also share our analysed results in the next issue of SiGHTiNGS! So watch this space!

In mid-2014, we plan to begin our monitoring surveys, which is part of our 5-year monitoring plan to seek out trends in the population abundances of both Indo-Pacific finless porpoises and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in Langkawi.



Photo: MareCet

Louisa using the DSLR sponsored by IDEA WILD during one of the LDR surveys



Photo: MareCet

The MareCet team (front row) with Ms Chalatih Junchompoo, Ms Natakritapan Pungsamrurn and Dr. Satoko Kimura back from a survey in October 2013.



Photo: MareCet

An Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) leaping in Langkawi

## Matang Dolphin Research is officially underway!

We are pleased to announce that MareCet's new research project, the Matang Dolphin Research, has officially kick-started in July 2013, thanks to the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong and Universiti Malaya Research Grant! Since then, there has been 82 sightings of cetaceans over 23 days of boat surveys in July, September and November, stretching from Kuala Gula to Kuala Jarum Mas. Bimonthly boat surveys will continue to be conducted for a minimum period of two years to study the population abundances, distribution and habitat use, movement and ranging pattern, habitat preferences and human-dolphin interactions, particularly fishing activities, of the cetacean community in Matang.



With over 250 hours spent searching for cetaceans on almost 800km of transect lines, there has been some very interesting sightings! Three species of cetaceans have been confirmed to inhabit the coastal and riverine waters of Matang, namely the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) and Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*). Both Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins have been found in the estuaries and coastal waters of Matang, whereas Indo-Pacific finless porpoises are found in the coastal waters. The observed group sizes ranges from 1 to 25 individuals and occasionally include calves.



Photo: E.K. Lim

Photo courtesy of E.K. Lim

The remains of *Hexanematichthys sagor* catfish, after being partially consumed by Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins.

The very first sighting of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in this project was in fact, an individual dolphin we nicknamed Patches, owing to the appearance of patchy lesions on its body. Exophytic lesions cover its face, rostrum, dorsal fin, part of its flanks and tail flukes. We hope that we will be able to see Patches again to monitor the progression of its condition. This was the first time in the four years we'd been studying dolphins in Malaysia that we've observed such a skin condition.

The Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins have been found to partially consume catfishes, particularly the Sagor catfish (*Hexanematichthys sagor*) that are abundant in the estuaries, leaving behind the head with sharp and deeply serrated dorsal and pectoral spines. The samples of catfish heads are collected, and data will be analyzed for prey preference studies. Due to the lack of knowledge on the diet of cetaceans, we also hope to be able to determine the prey species of cetaceans in Matang through the study of stomach contents, if and when samples become available.



Photo: MareCet

Patches, the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin with exophytic cutaneous lesions.

While conducting the November 2013 survey, a dead Irrawaddy calf of approximately 105cm was found floating in the sea off Kuala Trong. It was in an advanced stage of decomposition, and we were unable to make any guesses on the cause of its death. Strangely, there was a large slit along its belly and its body appeared to have been emptied out of all organs. We hope to continue to document and monitor cases of deaths, diseases and injuries observed on the cetacean population in Matang, and apply the research findings towards conservation efforts and management recommendations in the future.

Photo: MareCet



The dead Irrawaddy dolphin calf found during November 2013 survey

Photo: MareCet



The MDR team during one of the surveys in 2013

Matang has been an interesting site for cetacean studies, and we are very excited to discover more, thus improving our scientific knowledge about these awe-inspiring creatures. Interview surveys with local fishermen will begin in 2014 to collect data on fishing sites, cetacean occurrences, perception about cetaceans and promote information sharing. Volunteers are recruited to assist in data collection for boat surveys and interview surveys. This provides an opportunity for those who are interested in marine mammal science to learn more about cetacean research in Malaysia and gain a hands-on learning experience. So, look out for volunteer opportunities with Matang Dolphin Research!



Photo: MareCet

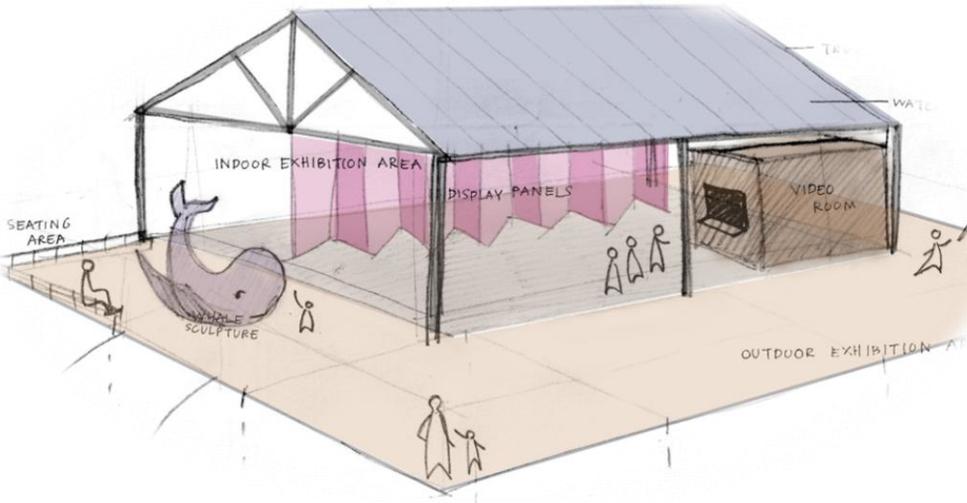
A pod of Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*), the most commonly sighted species of dolphins in the estuaries and coastal waters of Matang.

## Langkawi Floating Exhibition (FLEX)

It was a busy year with our preparation for FLEX. Unfortunately, the much anticipated launch of FLEX had to be postponed to 2014 due to circumstances beyond our control. However, we're in the final stretch of the preparation of the exhibits, and once the actual structure is completed we're on track for an early 2014 launch.

In the last two years, we have been fortunate to receive support of local volunteer designers who have helped us produce some outstanding exhibit items for FLEX. In fact, one of our exhibit designers, Mr. Nizar Sulaiman, received some media attention from some of his work that was inspired by the dolphins and the work that MareCet is undertaking.

In 2013, MareCet partnered with IACT College whose students used their creativity to design the FLEX official logo and poster exhibits. Multiple designs were received and the best ones have been chosen to be printed and displayed throughout the exhibition. The logo (*on right*) designed by Jia Jia was ultimately chosen as the official FLEX logo.



2014 will see us continuing our partnerships to get FLEX up and running as planned. In fact, this year we will be receiving some support from the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) who will be helping us in the promotional aspects of the project and Dana Belia 1Malaysia which will provide support for the exhibition development as well as the youth training component of FLEX operations.

FLEX is currently scheduled for a March 2014 launch and will be located in Langkawi Island, Malaysia. For any inquiries about FLEX, please contact [ask.marecet@gmail.com](mailto:ask.marecet@gmail.com).

**FLEX**  
LANGKAWI DOLPHIN FLOATING EXHIBITION

## DOLPHIN FLOATING EXHIBITION (FLEX)

COMING SOON.....  
Semi-interactive exhibition on whales and dolphins,  
featuring a 15-metre whale sculpture!  
STAY TUNED!

## Blast from the Past - MareCet's 2013



Photo: Suwat Jutapruet

### MareCet hosts its first scientific symposium

The idea of hosting a regional scientific symposium by a young NGO with limited manpower can certainly scare the daylights out of anyone, but we took up the challenge! On March 3 – 10, 2013, MareCet played organizer and host to the Third Southeast Asian Marine Mammal Symposium (SEAMAM III), held at the Fave Hotel, Langkawi. This symposium was a long overdue follow-up to the previous symposiums, SEAMAM I and SEAMAM II, which were held in the Philippines in 1995 and 2002, respectively. The general objective behind SEAMAM III was to bring together scientists working in the Southeast Asian region to discuss new research methodologies, challenges, as well as identify and update on issues pertaining to marine mammal conservation in the region, since the previous symposiums took place. A total of 60 participants attended SEAMAM III from 17 countries – Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, China, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Canada, Myanmar, Australia and United States. We were fortunate to have had the attendance of Dr Randall Reeves, one of the world's most experienced marine mammal researchers and current Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cetacean Specialist Group. The symposium was also fortunate to have been officiated by the then Deputy Undersecretary of the Biodiversity and Forestry Management Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr K. Nagulendran. SEAMAM III comprised 6 days of

presentations and discussions on marine mammal topics such as status reports, bycatch, health, animals in captivity, climate change impacts, threats and conservation, with the aim of assisting participants in advancing their conservation-based work in their respective study sites and countries. The participants then had a chance out on the water on one day in search of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and Indo-Pacific finless porpoises, but alas, the animals decided not to show on the day itself. Nonetheless, everyone was treated to the beautiful natural scenery of Langkawi's Geopark and went for a dip in its warm, emerald waters. Some enjoyed the dip so much, we had difficulty getting them back on the boat!

We would like to thank all the generous funders of SEAMAM III – Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong, Global Greengrants Fund, University of Malaya Sustainability Science Cluster, Convention on Migratory Species, Humane Society International, and the Marine Section of the Society for Conservation Biology. We also thank our Logistics Manager, Ms Katrina Shandhini, without whose efficient management skills and dedication would not have made SEAMAM III a success! We also thank our volunteer rapporteurs, Ms Tara Whitty, Ms Vivian Kuit, Ms Justine Jackson-Ricketts and Ms Ng Jol Ern for taking notes during presentations and discussions.

The outcomes of SEAMAM III will be published as a CMS Technical Series report and will be disseminated to participants and relevant government agencies upon its publication sometime in 2014.

## National Marine Mammal Stranding Network **LAUNCHED**

The National Marine Mammal Stranding Network was officially launched by the Department of Fisheries Malaysia in September 2013 in an event in Terengganu, Malaysia. This launch marks a significant milestone for Malaysia towards furthering the country's efforts in environmental research and conservation.

Although there remains many challenges to overcome, the official existence of this network provides a basis to move forward. MareCet remains a firm supporter of the collaborative spirit in which the network was established upon and will continue to actively provide assistance in achieving the network's goals and objectives.

*MareCet is currently a member of the Stranding Network Taskforce. Dr. Louisa and Fairul both are also officially part of the Stranding Response Teams within Peninsular Malaysia.*



Louisa collecting skin samples from a stranded whale

## MareCet on Bernama Today – 30 April 2013

Our research and conservation activities were featured on Bernama TV's weekday morning talk show called "Bernama Today" on Astro Channel 502. Louisa chatted with the talk show's host, Mr Gerard Ratnam for approximately 12 minutes on our Langkawi Dolphin Research program, the challenges of dolphin research and conservation work, and how the public could participate in our cause. Thank you Bernama TV for giving us the opportunity to go on air to talk about our sea-rious passion for marine mammals and the seas!



Louisa being interviewed on Bernama Today



Bernama Today featured MareCet on 30 April 2013

## Malaysian International Dive Expo

MareCet went “diving for dolphins” at the 8th Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) that was held at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), Kuala Lumpur, from 5 – 7 July 2013. It was our first time participating in the biggest annual dive event in Malaysia and we were incredibly excited to be there to spread awareness about our work to a large general public crowd and the diving community! The expo was an ideal platform for MareCet to draw public attention on marine conservation and raise the profile of marine mammals in Malaysia. The MareCet team had the opportunity to interact face-to-face with the swelling crowd and shared knowledge and information about general marine mammal facts as well as MareCet’s research and conservation efforts.

Besides having an exhibition booth, both MareCet’s co-founders, Louisa and Fairul, also delivered talks titled “Marine mammals in Malaysia (yes, Malaysia!) – Myths, facts and their conservation” and “Let’s Go Dolphin Watching!” respectively. We also managed to raise a considerable amount of funds during the expo by selling MareCet merchandise and through receipt of public donations. Thank you everyone who dropped by our booth and attended our MIDE talks and showed your support for us in one way or another! See you (maybe) at the next MIDE!



The MareCet booth @ MIDE 2013



Louisa presenting during MIDE 2013



Fairul presenting “Let’s Go Dolphin Watching!”



The MareCet exhibits during MIDE 2013

## Ocean Awareness Week @ USM

MareCet was invited by the Scuba Club of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang to join them in spreading the message on ocean conservation during their Ocean Awareness Week 2013. The event was held in USM grounds, from 6 to 10 May 2013, aimed at raising awareness among USM students on the importance of the ocean and its biodiversity.

Throughout the event, MareCet distributed information about our research and conservation efforts, put a dolphin skeleton on display and sold our MareCet merchandise. Our Vice-Chairperson, Fairul, was also invited to deliver a talk entitled “Marine Mammals and Humans” to the university community on the positive and negative interactions between humans and marine mammals. MareCet hopes that through this event, the university students will be more aware of the importance of the ocean, more responsible and care more for the marine environment despite living their lives in an urbanized society.



Photos: Vivian Kuit



Photo: Kee Alfian

“Whales, Dolphins and What the Sea is Saying”

Louisa spoke to a crowd of 800+ youth, mainly college and university students, on her lifelong ambition of becoming a marine biologist, the path she took to finally establish MareCet, the state of Malaysia’s marine environment, and why whales and dolphins are her chosen subjects in her 13-minute talk titled, “Whales, dolphins, and what the sea is saying”. As always, Louisa never fails to shine at public presentations, and wowed the crowd with her story, surprising environmental facts and pointers for youth participation in marine conservation. Kudos!

## TEDx Youth@KL 2013

Our Chairperson, Louisa, was invited to speak at the TEDxYouth@KL 2013 event held at The Penthouse @ The Icon, Kuala Lumpur on 16 November. What a great honour! The theme for this event was “Innovation: From Ideas to Impact”.



Photo: Bahariah Bahadom

Louisa presenting during TedxYouth@KL

## UPM Zoologico Week

In conjunction with the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) Zoologico Week 2013 organised by the UPM Zoologico Club, MareCet was invited to present a guest lecture entitled "Marine Mammals: Facts, threats and vets". The lecture was held at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, UPM on the 21st of November 2013, and was attended by an audience of aspiring veterinary students.

The lecture included basic information about marine mammals in Malaysia, an introduction about MareCet and the work we do, the significance of strandings, and how a veterinarian can help when a stranding occurs. The lecture was intended to expand the students' knowledge about marine mammals, help raise awareness about marine conservation and encourage them to consider to further their career as marine mammal veterinarians, which are currently lacking in Malaysia.

The lecture was followed by a Q&A session, with dozens of questions from the curious students. Sales of MareCet merchandises were also well-received by the supportive audience. We would like to sincerely thank the organizers and all involved for their great support.



Vivian presenting during UPM Zoologico Week



Vivian with the event organizer

Photos: Jol Ern Ng

## Naturally Langkawi Green Week @ Frangipani Resort

MareCet was invited to participate in Frangipani Resort's Green Week from 25 – 30 November 2013 to promote awareness and appreciation for the marine environment, particularly in relation to Langkawi's marine environment.

MareCet presented two talks relating to marine mammals and the threats they face in today's world during the event. Additionally, we also conducted a mini stranding response workshop which involved a presentation on marine mammal stranding incidents and how to respond to them, and a short practical session on providing first response when one encounters a stranded animal.

The workshop was held to provide information on proper stranding response techniques in lieu of the increasing number of stranding incident reports received in the area in recent times. Attendees included hotel staff and guests, local Langkawi naturalists and students of SK Pulau Tuba.



Practical stranding response demonstration

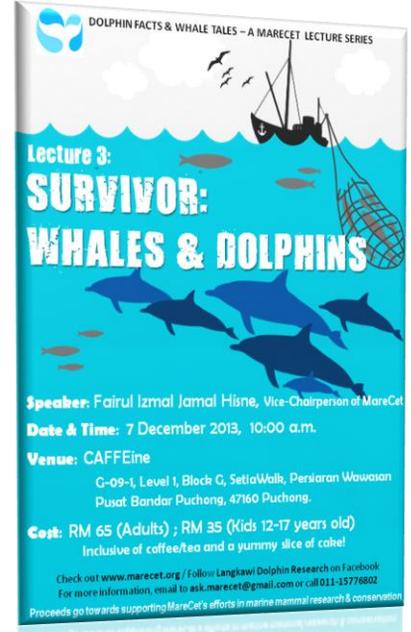
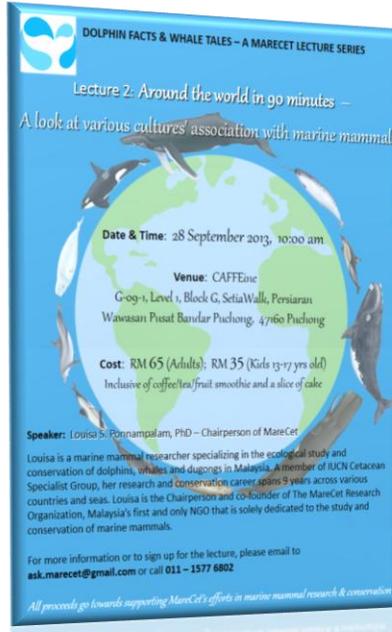
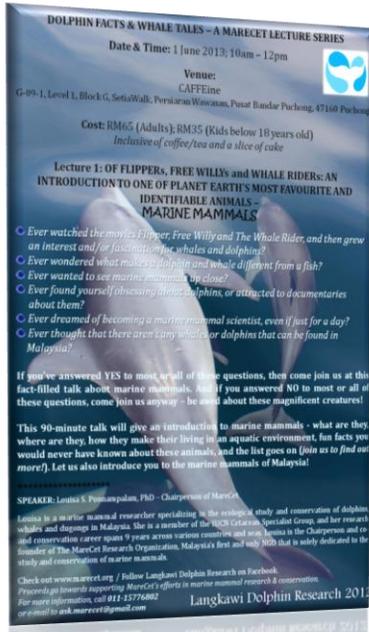


Photos: MareCet

The MareCet Team - December 2013

MareCet presents...

## “Dolphin Facts & Whale Tales: A MareCet Lecture Series”



John F. Kennedy once said, “The only reason to give a speech is to change the world”. The MareCet Lecture Series was developed with the idea that by sharing the information and knowledge we possess, we may be able to help change the world, one audience at a time.

We managed to share three lectures in the Series in 2013, kicking off with Lecture 1, “Of Flippers, Free Willys and Whale Riders – An Introduction to One of Planet Earth’s Most Favourite and Identifiable Animals... Marine Mammals” presented by Louisa. She subsequently delivered Lecture 2, “Around the World in 90 Minutes – A Look at Various Cultures’ Associations with Marine Mammals”. The Series was completed by Fairul with Lecture 3, “Survivor: Whales and Dolphins”.

Graciously hosted by CAFFEine café in SetiaWalk in Puchong, guests at each lecture were treated to a casual fact-filled morning in a cosy surrounding with delicious coffee and cakes. Less a lecture and more a meeting of like-minded people, talks were typically followed with some very lively discussions on current issues relating to the environment.



*For a great cuppa head over to CAFFEine at SetiaWalk, Persiaran Wawasan, Pusat Bandar Puchong!*

*CAFFEine is open from 12 – 11pm (Wed – Mon) and 4 – 11pm (Tue). Find out more at [www.caffeine.my](http://www.caffeine.my) or follow their coffee trail on Facebook.*



Photo: MareCet

## 2014 Sneak Preview

### Dugong Conservation Project

MareCet will be undertaking a multi-year research project to further our understanding of dugongs in Peninsular Malaysian waters. This project will build on the findings of the last aerial survey conducted in 2010. The findings from this new study will be used to enhance conservation efforts for the species within the area. The project will involve research in a multitude of scientific disciplines using a variety of research methods through collabora-



Photo: Louisa Ponnampalam

-tion with local and international colleagues. The project will commence in March 2014 and will be centred around the Johor east coast and islands. We can't give away too much now, but stay tuned for more information and new facts in the next issue of SIGHTINGS!

### MareCet Lecture Series: Friends of MareCet



MareCet will be continuing our Lecture Series with lectures scheduled throughout 2014. This year, the public will get the opportunity to explore the marine environment further with guest lecturers volunteering to present on topics relating to their field of expertise which include seagrass, coral reefs, even seahorses! As MareCet advocates for marine conservation, this series will help raise awareness on a range of topics focusing on the different segments of the marine environment.

Stay tuned for further updates on lecture dates and topics!

### Nature Leadership Camp

Great news for parents, students, and teachers! MareCet will be introducing a nature leadership camp program in 2014 which will allow participants to be involved in actual scientific research and conservation work. Participants will be able to be on-site, come on-board the research vessel and assist in gathering data through observations of dolphins in the wild on top of learning about marine and coastal environments.

Additionally, participants will be taught leadership strategies and principles typically employed by corporate organizations.

Stay tuned for further updates on our website and Facebook page (Langkawi Dolphin Research)!

## 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](mailto:ask.marecet@gmail.com).

### *Peer-reviewed Journal Articles, Book Chapter and Conference Proceedings*

Kimura, S., Ponnampalam, L., Akamatsu, T. and Yoda, K. 2013. Acoustic towing survey for marine mammals in Langkawi, Malaysia, with special reference to Indo-Pacific finless porpoise and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin. Abstracts of the 9th International Symposium on SEASTAR2000 and Asian Bio-logging Science (The 13th SEASTAR2000 Workshop), 18 - 19 March 2013, Kyoto, Japan. pp. 13.

Ponnampalam, L. S. 2013. The dolphins of the Matang Mangroves. Pages 110 - 112 in Ariffin, R. and Nik Mustafa, N.M.S. (Eds.). A working plan for the Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve, Perak. 6th Revision. Perak State Forestry Department, Malaysia.

Ponnampalam, L. S., Hines, E. M., Monanunsap, S., Ilangakoon, A. D., Junchompoo, C., Adulyanukosol, K. and Morse, L. J. 2013. Behavioral observations of coastal Irrawaddy dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*) in Trat Province, Eastern Gulf of Thailand. *Aquatic Mammals* 39(4): 401 - 408. DOI 10.1578/AM.39.4.2013.401

Ponnampalam, L.S., Jamal Hisne, F.I., Adulyanukosol, K., Ooi, J.L.S. and Reynolds III, J.E. Aligning conservation alongside research priorities as proactive measure for species and habitat management: The case of dugongs in Johor, Malaysia. Accepted in *Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation*, November 2013.

### *Presentations at professional meetings and public events*

Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Marine Science - Exploring Earth's Final Frontier. Mont Kiara International School. 19 December 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Lecture 3: Survivor Whales & Dolphins. MareCet Lecture Series: Whale Tales and Dolphin Facts. CAFFEine café. 7 December 2013. Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia.

Fairul Izmal J.H. & Ponnampalam, L.S. 2013. Marine Mammal Stranding Response Workshop. Naturally Green Week at Frangipani Resort. 29 November 2013, Langkawi, Malaysia.

Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Marine Mammal & Humans: Exploring Positive & Negative Interactions. Naturally Green Week at Frangipani Resort. 28 November 2013, Langkawi, Malaysia.

Ponnampalam, L. S. 2013. Of Flippers, Free Willys and Whale Riders - An Introduction to One of Planet Earth's Most Favourite and Identifiable Animals... *Marine Mammals*. Naturally Green Week at Frangipani Resort. 27 November 2013, Langkawi, Malaysia.

Ponnampalam, L.S. 2013. Whales, Dolphins, and What the Sea is Saying. TEDx Youth@KL 2013. 16 November 2013, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## *Presentations at professional meetings and public events (continued)*

- Kuit, S.H. 2013. Marine Mammals: Facts, threats and vets. UPM Zoologico Week. 21 November 2013. Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.
- Ponnampalam, L.S. 2013. Lecture 2: Around the World in 90 Minutes - A Look at Various Cultures' Associations with Marine Mammals. MareCet Lecture Series: Whale Tales and Dolphin Facts. CAFFEine café. 28 September 2013. Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia.
- Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Let's Go Dolphin Watching! 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian International Dive Expo. Putra World Trade Centre. 6 July 2013. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Ponnampalam, L.S. 2013. Marine mammals in Malaysia (yes, Malaysia!) – Myths, facts and their conservation. 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian International Dive Expo. Putra World Trade Centre. 6 July 2013. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Ponnampalam, L.S. 2013. Lecture 1: Of Flippers, Free Willys and Whale Riders – An Introduction to One of Planet Earth's Most Favourite and Identifiable Animals... Marine Mammals. MareCet Lecture Series: Whale Tales and Dolphin Facts. CAFFEine café. 1 June 2013. Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia.
- Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Marine Mammal & Humans: Exploring Positive & Negative Interactions. Ocean Awareness Week. Universiti Sains Malaysia. 10 May 2013, Penang, Malaysia.
- Fairul Izmal J.H. 2013. Wetlands: Habitat Sharing from a Marine Mammal's Perspective. MNS World Wetlands Day Celebration. Kuala Selangor National Park. 4 March 2013. Kuala Selangor, Selangor Malaysia.

## *Media coverage*

MareCet Chairperson and Co-Founder, Louisa Ponnampalam, was featured in Bernama Today on 30 April 2013. The video can be accessed at <http://marecet.org/news-and-publications/marecet-in-the-media>

MareCet Vice-Chairperson and Co-Founder, Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne, was featured as one of the 10 "Eco-Warriors" of FACES magazine in their March 2013 issue. The article can be viewed on <http://marecet.org/news-and-publications/marecet-in-the-media>

MareCet and the Langkawi Dolphin Research Project was featured in the July 2013 issue of Lestari Langkawi Geopark Sights and Sounds magazine in an article entitled "Dolphins in Langkawi: Furthering our understanding and conservation". Scanned copy of the article can be accessed through our Langkawi Dolphin Research page on Facebook.



## Thank you for all the support

2013 was another great year for us. We are truly grateful for all the support we received throughout the year be it in terms of financial, equipment, manpower, or 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 given us the capacity to fulfill our research objectives and we strongly believe the findings will be able to assist in conservation efforts in the area. The same appreciation goes to the Wildlife Research Centre of Kyoto University, Japan.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Jay Sweeney, Dr. Rae Stone and Dolphin Quest Incorporated for their continual support of our work and for sharing our conservation vision. Our thank you also to Dr. John Reynolds III, Anouk Ilangakoon, Prof. Ellen Hines Tan Yee Keat and Dr. Nicolas Pilcher for their support, encouragement and belief in our mission.

Our thanks also go to Datuk Azhar Mansor and Telaga Harbour, Langkawi, who continue to be an important part of our LDR program. We also like to thank IDEA WILD who provided us with equipment necessary for our LDR program, and Mr. Lim who is not only our MDR skipper, but one who has since shown tremendous support for our work. Thank you too to Gerard Wong for helping us design the great MDR project logo and Julian Perreira for helping us with our website.

And last but not least, to all the individuals who have supported and believed in us, we sincerely thank you. You are and will always be part of the MareCet family.

We look forward to a great 2014 ahead!



## 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 = RM 100,000 (5 surveys per year)
- 1 year policy advocacy expenses = RM 15,000
- 1 month operating cost for FLEX = RM 15,000
- 1 multi-parameter water meter = RM 20,000
- Stranding response and rescue = RM 5,000
- Support to attend international conference on marine mammal research = RM 30,000

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, LCD projectors, 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 Izmil Jamal Hisne at [partner.marecet@gmail.com](mailto:partner.marecet@gmail.com). 2014 will also see MareCet being a member of Simplygiving.com, a fundraising portal for non-profits. Do visit our page when it comes online in January 2014 and be a MareCet fundraising champion!

### MareCet would like to thank the following donors for their 2013 donations:

Dolphin Quest Inc.  
IDEA WILD  
Telaga Harbour Sdn. Bhd.  
Dr. Bernd Würsig  
Dr. Satoko Kimura  
Jeffri Tan

Cheryl Lim Sze-Hui  
Choo Chee Kuang  
Daniel Liew

All other anonymous donors who contributed to our donation boxes

## THANK YOU

## Volunteers speak out!

All our achievements to date has been a testament to those who have volunteered their time and energy to help us in our work – our project volunteers! Many of them have returned time and again to offer their help. We'd like to say thank you and send our heartfelt appreciation to each and everyone of them for their hardwork, dedication, and passion to the cause!

### 2013 Volunteers

Wendy Chin	Lee Yih Nin
Nizar Sulaiman	Cheong Chin Jou
Ummi Haslinda Mohd Rosli	Hasbullah Hasni
Yee Siong	Edie Ismail
Gerard Wong	Aaron Tan
Fadia al-Abbar	Sabrina Chan
Jenny Cantlay	Jasmine Zulkifli
Tan Yee Keat	Huda N.A.
Zuraidah Zainal Abidin	Kayleigh Hughes

Here are some words we've received from them regarding their experiences volunteering with us:

"On my recent adventure to MareCet's new survey site in Matang, I had the most exuberating experience! Not only because I had the chance to have great sightings of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in the wild, but also because I finally had the opportunity to get back to the survey boat again after two years. I had missed all the dolphin survey trips I'd been on, except for the part where I was badly burnt by the sun and became a well-cooked molting lobster. It is always great to be able to work in the field with Dr Louisa and Fairul – they are indeed two of my mentors. When I was still a lost undergraduate hanging around and didn't know where to head to next, they both really inspired me and gave me the strength to hold my faith in pursuing my dream to be a marine scientist. I learned from them to "work with passion" during my first marine mammal survey trip in Tioman in 2010."



"Congratulations to MareCet on turning 2 this January 2014! I am so glad to see the growth of MareCet; setting up an NGO in Malaysia is definitely not an easy task. The journey is TOUGH!! I have no doubt that with a bunch of awesome people in the team, MareCet will keep developing and be the leading team in marine mammal research and conservation not only in Malaysia, Southeast Asia and maybe in the world one day. All the BEST PEOPLE!!!"

## Volunteers speak out!

*It was a special experience for me. It is TOTALLY DIFFERENT from what you will see in the dolphin show! I feel really good when we're surrounded by a big group of dolphins and I shouted out involuntarily as the dolphins leaped because I'm just too excited! Everyone on the boat is so nice and friendly. I'll definitely take part again in this program in the future if I have the chance.*

**Cheong Chin Jou (Universiti Malaysia Terengganu marine biology student), MDR Sep2013 volunteer**

*I felt good and satisfied about the volunteer program as the experience was valuable. I think briefing the day before volunteer program was useful for me; at least I know what I am going to do for the next day.*

**Lee Yih Nin (Universiti Malaysia Terengganu biology student), MDR Sep2013 volunteer**

*In recent years I have had many voluntary experiences, but this one was definitely THE BEST EXPERIENCE so far! The people are very friendly and caring. Sighting dolphins is something really special, and even the days where there were no- or few dolphins, was still a good experience. I got to do things other tourists normally wouldn't. This voluntary opportunity really gives a good insight on what a cetacean researcher's life is like. I will definitely return to help MareCet do more surveys!*

**Fadia Al Abbar (Environmental science student from Netherland), MDR Nov2013 & LDR Dec2013 volunteer**

*Signing up to volunteer for 8 days was a spontaneous act on my part. It turned out to be A MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE! I really feel privileged to be able to "work" with dolphin researchers, and to see the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Irrawaddy dolphins and Finless porpoise on a daily basis. Thank you for the great experience and great camaraderie.*

**Gerard Wong (Graphic designer), MDR Nov2013 volunteer**

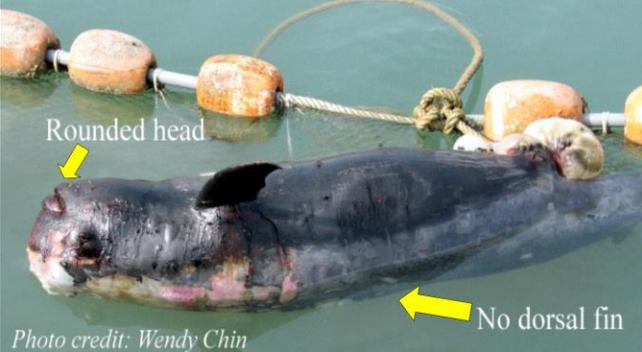
*My 10 days spent with them in Langkawi looking for porpoises and dolphins really made me RESPECT THEIR DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION. It was interesting learning how they record data about the cetaceans, their habitat, the sea conditions and the human activities that may affect them. They are a fantastically friendly group of people and welcomed me into their work. If you are keen to participate in their fieldwork then go with a positive, helpful attitude to be ready to learn from them and you can then share their excitement when cetaceans are sighted.*

**Jenny Cantlay (Veterinarian, Malaysian expatriate from UK), LDR Dec2013 volunteer**

**Report a Stranding!**

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU CHANCE UPON A DEAD DOLPHIN

Indo-Pacific finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*)  
Colour: Dark grey to black



Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), Male  
Colour: Pale grey / Pale grey with pink mottling



Sometimes, you may only find / encounter a very decomposed dolphin / porpoise and its skull. It may look like this:



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.

## Report a Sighting!

Help 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](http://www.marecet.org). Additionally, follow us on our facebook page 'Langkawi Dolphin Research' to report a sighting or to find out more about our programmes.



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



"Many of us ask what can I, as one person, do, but history shows us that everything good and bad starts because somebody does something or does not do something."

- Sylvia Earle, oceanographer



**MareCet**

Research | Awareness | Policy | Consultancy