

# LESTARI LANGKAWI GEOPARK SIGHTS & SOUNDS

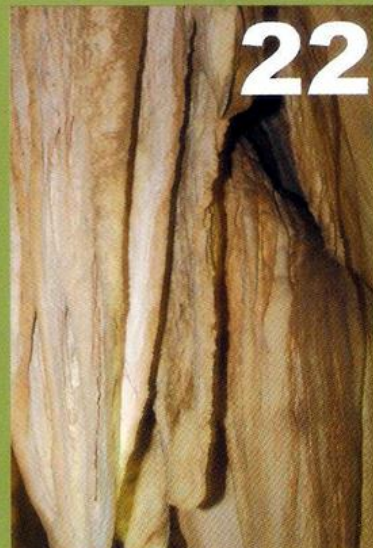
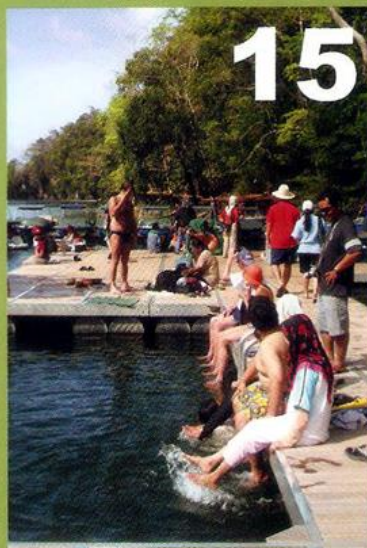
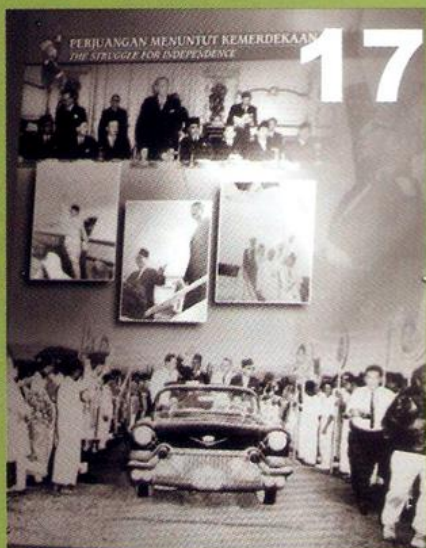
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Langkawi Research Centre Opens in  
Pantai Kok  
Langkawi Global Geopark Turns 6  
Romancing the Stone  
Looking Back at Tunku



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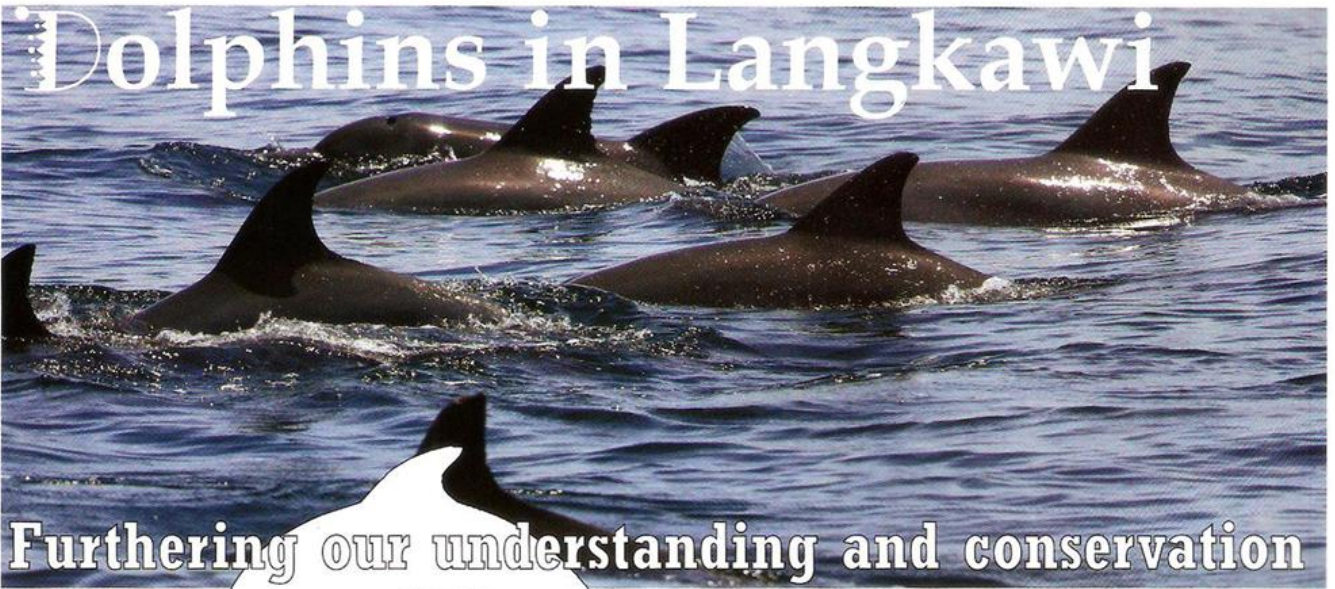
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# LLGSS





As the sun rises over the idyllic island of Langkawi, life begins to stir to face a new day. Sounds of birds and other wild animals can be clearly heard and fishermen can be seen arriving into the various jetties from a whole night's work. Since 2010, there has been another sight that greets a new dawn on the island with frantic activities occurring in Telaga Harbour, a harbor located at the northwest of the main Langkawi Island, nearby Burau Bay.

These early morning activities are conducted by the team from the MareCet Research Organization (MareCet) who has been regularly conducting marine mammal research surveys in Langkawi's waters. The survey is part of MareCet's flagship Langkawi Dolphin Research (LDR) program mainly focused on finding out the distribution, abundance and ecology of two commonly occurring marine mammal species in Langkawi, which are the Indo-Pacific finless porpoises (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) and the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*), though they have also recorded the presence of other less frequently occurring species such as the Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops aduncus*) and Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*).

To date, the LDR team has discovered that there are at least 140 Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins residing in Langkawi's waters with some of these individual dolphins having been re-sighted in specific areas around the island as many as nine times. A group of finless porpoise, for example, has been frequently sighted by the team as it heads out of the harbor at Burau Bay, suggesting the population may be residents to the area or, at the least, a frequent user of the area.

The team has also managed to identify specific individual animals using the mark-recapture method via photo-identification of dorsal fins and is currently analyzing these data to learn more of the animals' movements and habits within Langkawi's waters.

Divided into two groups, team members are involved in boat-based surveys of dolphin populations, interview surveys with local fishermen and tour guides, and conducting mini-events to raise awareness on the presence of these charismatic animals in Langkawi's waters. Throughout their three years of working in Langkawi, MareCet have hosted various community workshops for the tour boat drivers in Langkawi, to share with them their research findings as a means for them to transfer the knowledge to their guests. In addition, the workshops were also intended to encourage reporting of cetacean sightings, and to inform these



Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*)



*Sousa chinensis* with a calf



Bryde's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*)



same boat drivers on best practices when maneuvering around a group of dolphins or porpoises.

In 2012, LDR started a new component for the project in the form of acoustic surveys on the animals. The new component of their research is in close collaboration with Dr. Satoko Kimura who is a JSPS Research Fellow from Nagoya University, Japan. Using two custom-made acoustics equipment called the A-tag and AUSOMS-mini respectively, their aim is to estimate the abundance of two focal species using their echolocation clicks, and to compare the results with their estimate that would be derived from visual observations. Additionally, the team is also examining the acoustic signal patterns of these animals under different environmental conditions within their survey area. This new component of their project is very exciting as it is the first time that the acoustic method is being used to study cetaceans in the country! In this coming year, the LDR team will be working up their data on estimation of abundances of the two focal species, as well as analyzing their distribution patterns and movements around the Langkawi archipelago.

There have been many truly memorable encounters with these animals around Langkawi's waters. Although typically seeing these animals in small groups of two-to-three individuals, there have been instances where the team encountered hundreds of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins traveling in a group consisting both adult and juvenile animals. It is not uncommon to find the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins - being the more active species found in Langkawi's waters - breaching, leaping and playing with each other during these encounters. Another memorable sighting of this species was the first encounter with a newborn baby, possibly around a week old, swimming with its mother, an animal that the team has regularly sighted in the more pristine part of the island. The calf's presence was reassuringly symbolizing a healthy breeding population present within Langkawi's ecosystem.

As LDR continue their research and conservation of marine mammals in Langkawi waters, they also continue to provide opportunities for the general public to be involved in hands-on cetacean research through participation in their research activities.

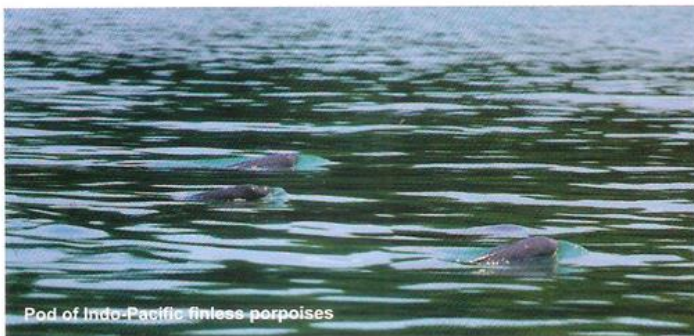
Furthermore, the public are also welcomed to participate in LDR's other activities which occur from time to time such as the upcoming LDR Floating Exhibition (FLEX), a unique exhibition featuring Langkawi's marine mammals and their environment slated to be launched in late 2013.



MareCet

**About the Organization:**

The MareCet Research Organization is a non-governmental organization established in January of 2012 committed to increasing scientific knowledge, implementing conservation actions, strengthening policies, and generating awareness on marine mammals and the greater marine environment. A brainchild of Dr. Louisa Ponnampalam and Fairul Izmal Jamal Hisne, MareCet is currently the sole organization dedicated to the research and conservation of marine mammals in Malaysia.



Pod of Indo-Pacific finless porpoises



Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin breaching



LDR research vessel - TT Sama Sama



Interview with fisherman in Kuala Triang



Sousa chinensis in front of Eagle Square