Happy 2012

Wow! Hard to believe we just finished the second month of 2012! Time flies when you have fun. And, we have been enjoying data analysis and processing. We are learning much from our data, but soon will begin preparing for our upcoming field seasons. We look forward to finishing up the analysis of the acoustic data from Bimini to see if the dolphins might have a daily pattern to their movements. The most exciting aspect of 2012 are the college classes we have scheduled. It is gratifying to share not only our results but our methods with budding scientists. I hope you are all enjoying the mild winter weather (in New England at least) and that your coming spring is festive and fun.

Kathleen

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Thank you to DCP Volunteers & Interns!!

DCP would like to thank Bill Dunn, Alexis Levengood and Brittany McIntosh for all their help this winter. Without your assistance, DCP’s office and our data analysis could not run so smoothly. You do a great job processing data and helping to keep things organized. Well done!

Internships

If you are interested in interning with DCP during a fall, spring or summer semester, more information is available on our website. Please note, most internships are office-based and do NOT include field work. Check out the web site before contacting us at info@dcpmail.org.

Mailing Address

Dolphin Communication Project
P.O. Box 711
Old Mystic, CT 06372-0711
USA
29 April – 5 May: For the fourth consecutive year, DCP will host Dr. Steve Turnbull (see page 4 for Dr. Turnbull’s guest piece!) and students from University of New Brunswick Saint John. Over the course of 6 days, students will learn the principles of photo-ID, be introduced to the biology and behavior of dolphins and, of course, spend time each day in search of and observing wild dolphins!

20 May – 31 May: For the first time, Kathleen and Kel are teaming with Dr. Rebecca Singer from Georgetown College (Kentucky). A diverse group of students will meet in Florida and travel to both our Bimini and Dolphin Encounters field sites. This course in ethological studies will introduce students to wild and captive dolphins – and even include a taste of terrestrial species at the zoo in Nassau. The course will wrap up in early June with independent work and Skype connections.

August: Daisy Kaplan will continue her data collection while leading Hunter College’s field course in Animal Behavior and Conservation. This year, two back-to-back sessions will be held in Bimini, and Kel is looking forward to both being a part of the program and joining their boat trips in search of Bimini’s dolphins.

If you are an instructor looking to provide a field experience to your students, please visit http://tinyurl.com/DCPCetaceanEcology and contact us for more details.

Cheers,

~Kelly

Did You Know …
Dolphins can move each eye independently (like a chameleon)!
I can only imagine that when Kathleen first went to Bimini in 1997 to shoot portions of the large-format film “Dolphins” for IMAX theaters by MacGillivray Freeman Films, she was not imagining DCP entering our 12th year of research here in 2012. Wherever did the time go?

In 2012, we will continue to join dolphin trips with Al Sweeting, Jr and Bimini Undersea interacting with their guests along the way. While we look forward to “pre-season” trips in March and early April, the main field season will be begin in late April with University of New Brunswick students. If you head to page 2, you can read updates on our university-level field courses, including our May course in collaboration with Georgetown College and our relationship with Hunter College’s Bimini field course. Aside from courses, I’ll be joined by interns in mid to late summer and you can be sure their to-do list will be quite long! As always, you can stay up to date with our efforts in Bimini by following our field reports, regularly posted to the DCP website, our Facebook page and Twitter. So, with this busy schedule, will 2012 beat the record number of dolphin trips we had in 2011? The record is now set at 94 trips – so, bring it on 2012!

~Kelly

Introducing two new Bimini dolphins up for adoption: Inka and Milo

Inka (#93) is the female offspring of Juliette (#12). Inka was first seen with her mother in 2009 and was added to the DCP photo-ID catalog right away. Inka suffered an injury to her fin, possibly even before her first birthday, making it easy to identify her. Thankfully, she recovered well and we have enjoyed watching her grow over the years. Inka was named in 2011 by Luke and Jo Creswell, for their daughter, Inka.

Milo (#96) first visited DCP’s camera in 2011. He made sure we noticed him and the vertical scar on his left side. He’s a social dolphin who spends time with a variety of other dolphins – young, old, male and female! Milo was named in 2011 by Steve McNicholas and Loretta Sacco, for their son, Milo.
My first trip to Bimini was in the spring of 1994. At that time I did not know much about the area or even about the Bimini Biological Field Station (aka “Shark Lab”). I began my graduate career in marine mammals but wanted to branch off into the world of shark biology. I had heard this was the best place to see so many different species of sharks and talk to one of the foremost authorities on sharks, “Doc” Gruber. It was incredible! I fell in love with the variety of marine life, the place and the people of Bimini. Upon my return home, I began to organize a shark biology and ecology field course so that I could take students down to Bimini the following spring.

It was a successful venture and I have returned to Bimini every year since then. Each trip is still as exciting as the first, and new ways to enrich the course are being developed all the time. My students are blown away by the experience, getting the opportunity to observe such a variety of marine life and see so many different species of sharks up close! Some of my students have even returned back to Bimini to volunteer at the Shark Lab.

By now you are wondering to yourself, why is this guy rambling on about sharks in the Dolphin Gazette? Well, what started out as a shark program many years ago, has now also spawned a dolphin field course. During a trip to Bimini a few years ago, I took the shark biology students out to interact with the dolphins as a side trip with Al Sweeting Jr. While on the ride out to the dolphin grounds, he mentioned that there might be an opportunity to start a dolphin course if I was interested. I said yes without any hesitation and told him to keep me informed. Long story short, I received an email from Al a short time later stating that if I was interested to contact Kel Melillo (now Kel Melillo-Sweeting) from DCP. The rest, as they say, is history.

This spring, I will be taking the fourth group of students down to Bimini to experience the wonders of the dolphins in this area and working with Kel and DCP. The students get the chance to observe and study the dolphins in their natural environment and are in constant amazement of these animals. Some have become determined to study marine mammals as a result. Last year the students adopted two of the dolphins in the area, Lil’ Jess and Addie. I personally adopted Tilly (she is my favourite)! In addition to the amazing experience of learning about and observing the dolphins and other marine life, the students also get to meet and interact with the incredible people of Bimini. I just can’t say enough about how great Kel, DCP, Al, Audley, and the Sea Crest Marina are to us! Thank you all! And of course, a huge thanks to the dolphins of Bimini whom without, none of this would be possible.

Being in Bimini and having the opportunity to experience either the UNB/Shark Lab course or the UNB/DCP course or even both, the students quickly learn that field research is not like that portrayed on television. They learn that field work is tough and demanding, and sometimes tedious. A valuable life lesson! They leave the course(s) either knowing they want to continue on in their studies doing field work or go running for the first opportunity to work in a lab! I would encourage any student that is contemplating such a career move to get some field experience! Thanks to Kel, I have been gradually drawn back into the realm of marine mammals and this trend appears to be continuing. I did my graduate work on seal bioacoustics and as I mentioned turned to the dark side (to study sharks) and have been conducting a long-term study on the porbeagle shark in the Bay of Fundy, Canada (very cold and murky water). Now, with this course with the DCP, a collaborative project looking at shark bites on the dolphins in Bimini with Kel, and attending at a recent marine mammal conference, I find myself keenly interested in marine mammals once more! I have even started a project on fin whales here at home and have a student hired. This of course is in addition to the porbeagle shark project.

So, if you are reading this newsletter and have never been to Bimini, plan on doing so at some point. It is an amazing experience. If you are a student and are contemplating studying marine mammals, come to Bimini and partake in an exciting course offered by DCP! You will not regret it! The only way to truly understand and study animals such as the dolphins (and other marine life) is to emerge yourself in their world!
Comparing Object Play in Captive and Wild Dolphins

W. E. Greene, K. Melillo-Sweeting, K. M. Dudzinski

The purpose of our study was to examine whether there is a difference in the frequency of object play exhibited by dolphins from two groups. Data were collected with underwater video, and event sampled for play involving objects. From 159 hr of data, roughly 102 min featured object play: 75 min from RIMS and 26 min near Bimini. A total of 304 bouts of object play were documented at RIMS, while 73 bouts were observed around Bimini. Juvenile dolphins engaged in solo and mutual play more than twice that of other ages from both study groups. Male dolphins at RIMS exhibited object play slightly more than females: at Bimini, male dolphins were not observed to play with objects during interactions with conspecifics (mutual) and engaged in object play about half as often as female spotted dolphins. Combining both groups, dolphins played with 23 different objects that were grouped into six categories: biological debris, human made objects, inanimate objects, other, people, and trash. RIMS dolphins played most with all objects except people while Bimini dolphins interacted with sand more than any other object. The role of play is considered important to development and maintenance of social relationships and to learning skills required for survival.

Development and reciprocity in pectoral fin contact between dolphins

K. M. Dudzinski

Pectoral fin contact among dolphins is a conserved behavior consistently documented between individuals. Social and hygienic functions have been identified with partner preference exhibited. Interactions of a group of captive bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) were video-documented over a nine year period. Development of pectoral fin contact between individuals was examined among 33 dolphins, which were roughly divided into eight groups – one group of five unrelated males and seven matrilines with two to five offspring. Immediate reciprocity in pectoral fin contact was observed more among non-kin than between related dolphins, whereas overall reciprocity seemed not related to kinship. Pectoral fin contact between same-sex versus mixed-sex sibling pairs was not significantly different, although non-kin same-sex pairs exchanged significantly more pectoral fin contact than mix-gender pairs. Adult females were more likely to initiate pectoral fin contact with non-weaned calves than older offspring. These results, coupled with conclusions from a comparative study of the same behavior among three distinct populations, suggest that contact via the pectoral fin might be used to send different messages depending on context and, potentially, personality. It seems that young dolphins must learn proper social decorum for application of pectoral fin contact when socializing.
As you might recall from the recent fall issue of the Dolphin Gazette, DCP collected acoustic data in Bimini and at Dolphin Encounters in 2011 with our new gear - the SM2M passive acoustic monitoring unit. (http://www.wildlifeacoustics.com/products/marine-monitoring). We are currently processing the data collected at both sites. Alexis and Brittany are helping review the audio data from two deployments near Bimini, and Bill Dunn has been helping with data processing of the SM2M SPL data from November. The SM2M did indeed record dolphin clicks and whistles. As we process more of the data, we will look to see if there are diel patterns in the vocal behavior of the dolphins frequenting the area near Bimini. In early November, Kelly and Kathleen spent 4 days recording dolphin sounds and ambient noise levels in the pools at Dolphin Encounters. For both locations, the SM2M was set for continuous recording, which leads to lots of time to be spent examining the data. Our goal is to have all the data processed before the summer season so we can redeploy the SM2M for more data collection. Stay tuned for the spring issue of the Gazette for an update!

Vienna or bust!

This March, Kathleen and Justin will attend the EAAM meeting in Madrid, Spain. It is the 40th symposium for the European Association for Aquatic Mammals. After the meeting, Kathleen will visit the University of Vienna to meet with Thomas Bugnyar. Thomas is part of the Department of Cognitive Biology at the University of Vienna; his work has focused on social interactions among ravens. Typically in science we use coefficients of association - measures of the amount of time individuals spend together - to assess their social relations. Thomas and colleagues looked at relationship quality as comprising three separate components, its value, compatibility and security. The data set collected by Kathleen and the DCP team is a rich one that details the interactions between individual dolphins from four groups. So, meeting with Thomas is the culmination of discussions on how best to assess our data to examine the quality of social interactions among dolphins. The quality of a social relationship represents the history of past social interactions between two individuals.
Adopt a Wild Dolphin

www.adoptawilddolphin.com

What's in your Adoption Kit?

- An official adoption certificate
- Photograph of your adopted dolphin
- Details on how to download dolphin vocalizations from the Bimini adopt-a-dolphins as a ringtone or audio file
- DVD containing video of the Bimini dolphins
- Biography of your adopted dolphin
- Welcome letter and registration info
- Information Booklet with Atlantic spotted dolphin fact sheet and info about the Dolphin Communication Project
- Dolphin trading card sample

Dolphins currently up for adoption

Adopting a wild dolphin with DCP helps to fund:

- The purchase of new research equipment (e.g., cameras, underwater microphones)
- Conservation and education programs on Bimini, in the US and around the world
- Publication and dissemination of DCP’s research results to the scientific community and the general public
- Maintenance of the DCP website, field reports, and our podcast The Dolphin Pod
- Classroom education programs for school-aged children including DCP Youth Program, Dolphin Research Trainee, Classroom Connections
- Volunteer, ecotour and internship opportunities for the public

Name one of the Bimini dolphins and we’ll add your dolphin to this list! Check our website for details.

Holiday gift ideas
www.cafepress.com/holidaydolphin

Adopt-a-wild-dolphin t-shirts
tinyurl.com/ylfx44v

Where does money raised from DCP’s adopt-a-wild-dolphin program go?

- Educational Programs 32%
- Scientific Research 55%
- Fundraising 13%
DCP Announcements!

New Paper (just published)


This is the third DCP paper to discuss dolphins’ use of pectoral fins to contact each other. It is the first to include data from our Bimini, Bahamas field site as well as explore self-rubbing among dolphins at Bimini, Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences and Mikura Island, Japan. It was published in February 2012.

Google Plus

**DCP now has a page on Google+**

If you are already a Google+ user, please consider adding DCP to your circles. We’re new to the Google+ phenomenon, but hope to use this social networking service to share news and updates from DCP in the years to come. For those of you not sure what Google+ is all about, here’s a quick intro from Google:

**A quick look at Google+**

Google+ makes connecting on the web more like connecting in the real world. Share your thoughts, links and photos with the right circles. Use easy, spontaneous video chat to strike up conversations with as many as nine people at once. Get everyone on the same page with fast, simple group chat. We’re very excited about the new approach to sharing we’ve created through Google+, but this is really just the beginning.

**Circles**

You share different things with different people. But sharing the right stuff with the right people shouldn’t be a hassle. Circles make it easy to put your friends from Saturday night in one circle, your parents in another, and your boss in a circle by himself, just like real life.
DCP’s Adopt-a-Dolphin Program

DCP currently has ~20 dolphins from our catalog of Atlantic spotted dolphins residing around Bimini, The Bahamas available for adoption. While adoptive parents do not get to take their dolphins home, they will receive a certificate of adoption, a photo of their adopted dolphin, some facts about Atlantic spotted dolphins, information about DCP and our research around Bimini and a dolphin video. They will also receive the most recent edition of the Dolphin Gazette, DCP’s quarterly newsletter, announced quarterly by eblast. Be sure to send us your email address, or subscribe online at the newsletter page.

Yes! I want to adopt a dolphin!

Some of our dolphins are listed below. For a complete list & all dolphin biographies, check out www.adoptawilddolphin.com

Juliette | Niecey | Tilly | Swoosh | Nemo | Lone Star | Trudy | Tina | Lumpy | Lil’ Jess |
Freckles | Split jaw | Vincent

I would like to adopt a dolphin: $30 for one year. **Dolphin name:**

Please cut out and mail your order form, with check, to DCP at P.O. Box 711, Old Mystic, CT 06372-0711. Credit card payment is available online through our web site at www.dolphincommunicationproject.org

Please SEND my adoption package to:

Name: __________________________
Address: __________________________________
_______________________________________
City: ____________ State: ____ Zip: ______
Email: ____________________________

If this is a gift, please note gift **GIVER** address:

Name: __________________________
Address: __________________________________
_______________________________________
City: ___________ State: ____ Zip: _____
Email: ____________________________

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**Postcards**  $1.00 each/ 3 for $2

- [Postcard Image 1](image_url1)
- [Postcard Image 2](image_url2)

**Iruka Gear**  To purchase Iruka gear visit www.cafepress/irukagear

- [Iruka Gear Image 1](image_url3)
- [Iruka Gear Image 2](image_url4)

**Bookmarks**  $0.25 each/ 5 for $1.00

- [Bookmark Image 1](image_url5)
- [Bookmark Image 2](image_url6)

**Notecards**  $2.50 each/ 3 for $6

- [Notecard Image 1](image_url7)
- [Notecard Image 2](image_url8)

**DCP Gear**  To purchase DCP gear, visit www.cafepress/dcpgear

- [DCP Gear Image 1](image_url9)
- [DCP Gear Image 2](image_url10)

**Membership**

- **$100 Bimini** : Calendar, 6 Dolphin Trading Cards, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letters from Kathleen Dudzinski and from Kelly Melillo Sweeting
- **$100 DE** : DE adopt-a-dolphin kit, Dolphin calendar, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter
- **$100 RIMS** : DVD about RIMS dolphins, Dolphin calendar, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter
- **$1,000 Research** : Adopt-A-Wild-Dolphin kit, Calendar, Water bottle, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter, Update following dolphin survey
- **$500 Education** : Dolphin Activity Guide and DVD, Calendar, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter, Signed copy of Dolphin Mysteries. A visit from a DCP researcher OR a free Classroom Connections program
- **$200 Dolphin Pod** : Calendar, Water bottle, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter, Involvement in the podcast episode
- **$150 Conservation** : Calendar, Water bottle, DCP Info Booklet, Personal welcome letter, Personalized update following Bimini beach clean-ups

Support DCP's research efforts by purchasing some of the many products that we offer for sale. All products seen here are also available on our website: www.dolphincommunicationproject.org All profits from the sale of these products will directly fund DCP’s research and education efforts. DCP is a nonprofit organization.
Shark or Dolphin!
Can you tell if these dorsal fins belong to a shark or a dolphin?
Answers at the bottom of this page (no peeking!)