



# The Dolphin Gazette

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From the Dolphin Communication Project, Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration  
55 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic CT 06355

[www.dolphincommunicationproject.org](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org) and [www.mysticaquarium.org](http://www.mysticaquarium.org)

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### ***A Note from Kathleen***

At least in Connecticut, on Bimini and on Mikura, the 3 H's of summer are solidly upon us: it is *hot, hazy, and humid*. Only recently has the humidity broken in southeastern CT. We have an exciting newsletter for you this July with interim reports from Kelly and Darcie on Bimini and Justin on Mikura. Many dolphins have been re-sighted and a few new individuals have been identified. Remember that the field reports from both locations are posted to our web site and will remain there - check out the happenings as our field researchers log each day. Our Name-A-Dolphin Program is exceptionally popular with more than 22 dolphins now available for adoption. As you may remember from the last issue, the Dolphin Gazette now includes details on MAIFE's Animal Parent and Marine Animal Rescue adoption programs. We hope our diehard DCP supporters will enjoy this new information. You may remember Kelly Melillo, one of our Bimini Field Researchers, but in keeping with our student introductions, you will get to learn more about Kelly and her plan of study. I must admit to absolutely no jealousy of Kelly's decision to enter graduate school at Alaska Pacific University! But, I am glad Kelly will continue her research with DCP. I also want to introduce Kristy Beard, a previous DCP intern who has returned as the new DCP Project Assistant. Kristy interned for DCP in the fall of 2000, and was actually the second intern to ever work at DCP. Now, she will help me coordinate all aspects of DCP's research, education workshops, and data analyses. Kristy begins her graduate studies this fall at the University of Connecticut. Welcome Kristy, and thank you already for all your effort and great ideas! I hope you, the DCP supporter and Gazette reader, enjoy this issue of our newsletter as much as I have. Thank you for your continued support!

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**DCP and MAIFE are participating in the Rocky Neck Heart Walk on 16 October 2005 to support the American Heart Association. If you are in the area and would like to join us at the Walk, please email us at [dcp@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:dcp@mysticaquarium.org). Thanks! Kristy**

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***YES, there is still space on our Eco-Tour trips to Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences (RIMS). Please see page 4 for more information.***

## Interspecific Interactions and Hybridization in Marine Mammals

Kelly Melillo

Master's Student, Alaska Pacific University



Kelly Melillo has been with DCP since June 2003. Read on to find out more about Kelly and her research among the Bimini, The Bahamas dolphins!

### Plan of Study:

As an undergraduate student at Connecticut College, I was able to complete an internship with the Dolphin Communication Project during the summer of 2003. This was to be the beginning of a wonderful relationship! During my first summer at DCP's Bimini field site I was searching for a focus, feeling a bit lost among the array of dolphin behaviors, which for the first time, I was witnessing in person. One day, we came upon a group of dolphins that included both spotted and bottlenose dolphins, two species whose ranges clearly overlap in this area. Immediately my curiosity was peaked and I wanted to better understand these interactions. Once I returned for my senior year at Connecticut College, this interest manifested itself in the form of an independent study—one that quickly showed the potential for an even closer look. Thus, it has been extended into my upcoming Master's thesis.

Data continued to be collected in 2004, is being collected now, and will be collected again next year. As we watched the two species interacting, we quickly saw that the most common behaviors were sexual behaviors. In each observation thus far, it has been male bottlenose dolphin(s) entering the group of spotted dolphins and initiating sexual contact. We have yet to see the spotted as the aggressors, which raises questions about why the bottlenose are leaving their own group and why the spotted allow the behavior to occur, even with their youngest members. At this point, we do not know whether or not these mating attempts are successful, and if they are, whether or not the hybrid offspring will be fertile. These are questions that can only be

answered by continuing to monitor the populations.

Prior to analyzing the Bimini data, I will continue a thorough literary review on other known cases of marine mammal hybridization, both in the wild and in captive settings. Marine mammal hybridization, although not completely understood, is not exactly rare. So, what aspects of the cases we have already seen can be applied to the Bimini populations? What are the motivating factors, generally and specifically, behind interspecific mating attempts? When the mating is successful, and fertile offspring are produced, what are the consequences for each population? Will any of this analysis lead to new questions about how we define a species? When I begin my Master's work at Alaska Pacific University I am eager to look at all these questions, and see what new questions arise.

### Background:

Kelly Melillo grew up in Connecticut visiting Mystic Aquarium as a child. She attended Connecticut College for her undergraduate studies. In 2004, Kelly (Kel) graduated with a B.A. in Environmental Studies. While at Connecticut College, Kel took a semester of personal leave, working and traveling along the east coast of Australia before attending the University of Glasgow, Scotland for a semester, after which Kel spent her first summer on Bimini, continuing DCP's research of spotted dolphins. Kel is now in her third summer as a researcher with DCP and is looking forward to attending Alaska Pacific University this fall. Kelly hopes to complete her Master's in the spring of 2007. After that, well, we'll see!

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***Internships:*** We offer internships to students for personal development and for college credit. Credit is arranged by each intern with his or her school. Internships are offered on a semester basis. For details on internships and the application process, please visit the Education page of DCP's web site, which links to the college internships page on the MAIFE website. Field positions are limited and are only available during summer months.

*The Dolphin Gazette* is also available on-line at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/newsletter](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/newsletter).

Welcome Kristy Beard!

DCP is happy to welcome Kristy Beard back to the team. Kristy, who first began her work with DCP as a data analysis intern in 2000 while DCP and Kathleen were still located in California, has taken on the new position of Project Assistant. During her hiatus from DCP, Kristy lived in Long Island, Australia, western New York, and Florida (yes, like all of us, she likes to travel). She received her BS in Psychology/Biology from Southampton College in Long Island, NY, before heading to Australia for 3 months to assist in a photo ID project of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. After returning to the US, she spent some time with her family in Rochester, NY, then moved to Florida for 3 years. After volunteering for a boater compliance study on Manatee Speed Zones, Kristy took a seasonal position with Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI), assisting in aerial surveys and photography of right whales during winter months, after which she worked with manatees at FMRI. After just over a year, she decided to return to working with dolphins, and accepted a position at Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute in Orlando, as a Marine Mammal Stranding Assistant. After all that, she has finally taken the plunge and been accepted to the University of Connecticut for graduate work! Happy to be back in the Northeast, Kristy is very excited about her new role within DCP and her graduate work. Glad to have you back, Kristy!

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### ***Dolphin Gazette* in your email**

Would you prefer to receive your quarterly copy of the *Dolphin Gazette* in your email instead of your snail mail? For those of you who wish to save a tree or two (as well as some postage), we are offering this option beginning with the next issue of the *Gazette*. If you prefer us to email your *Gazette*, please send us an email at [dcp@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:dcp@mysticaquarium.org). We do request that you email us *from the address you wish your Gazette to be sent to*. If you are using an account that requires received emails to be identified in your address book, please add us to ensure that you will receive your newsletter! Note that the *Gazette* is generally a 1MB PDF file, but can be larger.

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### **DCP T-Shirts!!**

That's right, you read it correctly! The long-awaited DCP T-Shirts have been re-designed, and are available for purchase. Like all DCP products, they

can be purchased via our website at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.com](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.com).



### **The Glass Block Wall**

You now have the opportunity to purchase and inscribe a glass block that will become part of a unique glass block wall, tentatively scheduled for installation at MAIFE in spring 2006. The block will be etched with text of your choosing. You may even have your corporate logo etched on the block.

Blocks make fantastic gifts for any occasion and are a great way for you to express your support for Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration. A local glass-etch artist will etch all glass blocks.

Not only will your contribution go to the care of our animals, the upkeep of our exhibits, and the continuation of our wide-reaching education programs, it will enable you to make your mark at the Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration that will last for years to come!

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### **Animal Parent Program**

Jessica Guidry & Deena Fabricant

Are you interested in supporting the animals at the Aquarium? You can adopt one of the numerous animals available through our Animal Parent program. The animals currently available for adoption include sea stars, blue lobsters, African black-footed penguins, California sea lions, and beluga whales. Each adoption makes a significant contribution to the care and well-being of the animals in our facility for one year. Adoptions make a great gift for both children and adults for any occasion and can be renewed yearly. For those of you who have previously chosen to become Animal Parents, please consider renewing your adoption(s).

We are always looking for new ways to improve the MAIFE Animal Parent program. Currently, we are working on some exciting new benefits for our Animal Parents, such as an Animal Parent recognition wall/board at the Aquarium, and new Animal Parent products. For more information on the Animal Parent Program please call us at (860) 572-5955 ext 553, email [animalparent@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:animalparent@mysticaquarium.org), or check out our website at [www.mysticaquarium.org](http://www.mysticaquarium.org).

*MAIFE is a non-profit (501c3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible. Consult your tax accountant for details.*

## Mid-Season Update from Mikura

This year's field season in Japan has been (so far) a glorious success! For the first time, Kathleen was not on Mikura for the duration of the season. Instead, she has left the task of data collection to me (Justin). It is an awesome responsibility, but everything has gone off without a hitch. We arrived on Mikura on 22 May, and the season will officially come to a close around 20 July. I have had a plethora of boat trips; 32 so far, with more expected before the season ends. It has equated to ~ 61 hours of time spent on boats, with 9 hours of video recorded! That means a 14.5% return on effort (number of video minutes recorded divided by the time spent on the boat looking for dolphins). We have had 83 sightings so far with 162 water entries for data collection. If this keeps up for the remainder of my time here, it should be our best season yet! This is due in part to the generosity of the boat captains and some good luck with weather conditions.

We have sighted ten new calves born this season, with many re-sightings of our old favorites: #161 (Koshakure), #032 (Atokake), #033 (Maekake), #001 (Kuchizure), #034 (Maekake Jr.), #073 (Sankaku) and more. Final numbers of re-sightings are still being processed, but it is expected that the numbers will be about the same as last year. It has been particularly exciting to see #086 (Hamuchan) and her neonate from last year (Hamlet) back again – poor Hamlet received an extremely bad shark bite last year, and was not expected to live. I am happy to report that little Hamlet is looking healthy!



We also continued volunteering at the local junior high and elementary school helping Tanaka-sensei with his wonderful English classes. It is great fun to interact with the kids on Mikura, and it is a wonderful way to share our enthusiasm for dolphins with the local community. This year, we will participate in two late-July workshops for kids at Enoshima. It will give us a chance to teach a young and eager group of

students all about the work that we do here on Mikura, as well as a bit about dolphin ecology, biology, and behavior research.



Miyake, 2005

Photo: J. Anderson

Don't forget to follow along with the rest of the season by catching our daily field reports at <http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/fieldreports/default.asp>.

Justin Gregg, Research Associate

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Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences

We are returning to Roatan to continue our studies of the dolphins at RIMS, Anthony's Key Resort, Honduras. This year's field season will run from ~7 September to ~1 October. Be sure to check the field report section of our website for daily updates!

### *DCP Roatan Ecotour Trips*

Space is still available on our two one-week-long trips to Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, **10-17 September & 24 September - 1 October**, although the trips are filling up fast! If you are interested in participating in our research at RIMS (data collection and preliminary analyses), contact Deena Fabricant ([dfabricant@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:dfabricant@mysticaquarium.org)) or Bill Sperling ([bsperling@idyllwild.com](mailto:bsperling@idyllwild.com)). Of course, the trip won't be all work - you'll also get to observe and interact with dolphins! *Please note: children under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian – absolutely no exceptions!!* More details are available at: [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/ecotours](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/ecotours).

*We look forward to seeing you in Roatan!*

## Mid-Season Update from Bimini

MAIFE is a non-profit (501c3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible. Consult your tax accountant for details.

The 2005 Bimini field season began 28 May, when Kelly Melillo arrived to the island. Darcie Blanding arrived the following week and boat trips with Bimini Undersea's Wild Dolphin Excursions were off to a great start! A summary of what has been done and seen so far follows.



We are so glad to be back on Bimini, back on the boats, and back to studying the Atlantic spotted dolphins that call this area home. June is the rainy season, and we feel as though we have been battling the weather ever since we arrived.

Hopefully the sky will stay a bit sunnier and the seas a bit calmer for July and August. We are pleased to announce that the sea lice season is completely over - thus, we don't exit the water with itchy bites anymore! As of 12 July 2005, we've completed 22 boat trips. These have resulted in 96 hours, 52 minutes of total effort, resulting in 33 sightings and 25 encounters. We are collecting video and acoustic data using Kathleen's very first MVA, and taking digital still photographs for the photo-identification catalog.

To date, we've re-identified 23 of the 76 spotted dolphins in the catalog. This is only 10 less than the 2004 season. We've even been able to add a new animal to the catalog! DCP ID# 80 goes to a young class 3 (juvenile) female. She was actually seen the first time during 2004, but because she had so few markings, she was not officially added to the catalog. This year, we got great video of her, so into the catalog she went! We have already seen her on four boat trips, interacting with some of our more regularly seen dolphins, including #10 (Romeo) and #35 (Lil' Jess). Check out the Adopt-A-Dolphin update section on this page for more details.

As with previous seasons, we're also observing plenty of mothers with young calves. We generally do not see calves as young as those observed at Mikura, but we do regularly see feisty youngsters. Calves are not added to our photo-ID catalog until they have a re-identifiable marking: a spot pattern or scars. We have seen a calf who is missing about half of his right fluke. This animal will become ID#81.

We have also seen groups of bottlenose dolphins on a regular basis. These dolphins are generally extremely skittish and uninterested in boats, so they are not easy subjects to research. However, we do take notes on the bottlenose when we see them, whether in a group of only bottlenose, or interacting with spotted dolphins. We've witnessed mating behaviors between the two species on two separate occasions this season.



Photo: K. Melillo

Unfortunately, we were unable to visit with local schools this year. We arrived at the end of the school year, with principals and teachers just too busy to host us. We look forward to next year, when we will share our results with students.

Now, mid-July, we are constantly keeping an eye on hurricane development and activity. We hope that threatening weather stays away from the island and that other areas remain safe as well.

So, as with Justin from Mikura, we welcome you to visit the DCP website to follow along with our daily research lives by reading our field reports.

Kelly Melillo & Darcie Blanding, Research Associates

### **Adopt-A-Dolphin Updates**

This summer, Bimini researchers have seen quite a few of the Atlantic spotted dolphins available through DCP's Adopt-A-Dolphin program. Here's an update!

*Already Seen:* Finn (#09), Romeo (#10), Vincent (#11), Juliette (#12), Tina (#14), Freckles (#15), Lumpy (#17), Split Jaw (#22), White Blotch (#29), Lil' Jess (#35), Swoosh (#36), Cerra (#38), Niecey (#48), Billy (#64), Nemo (#76) and Dolphin Dandy (#77)—And, all are doing well and growing.

*Waiting to be Seen:* Buster (#04), Picky (#16), Cleopatra (#41), Lone Star (#56), and Teardrops (#68). But, fear not if your dolphin is listed here—the summer is not over yet! Check out our field reports and the fall issue of the *Dolphin Gazette* for a full account the dolphins' antics.

If you would like to Adopt-A-Dolphin, you can do so by sending in the form at the end of this newsletter, or by going online:

<http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/Adopt.asp>.

## Marine Animal Rescue Program

Heather Medic, Standing Coordinator

Another seal season is coming to a close for the Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Stranding Program (MMSTSP). Our first seal call of the season was in November. Most of our calls occurred between February and April, though we are still getting occasional calls.

The four species that we see in this region are Harp, Hooded, Grey, and Harbor seals. They leave our waters and migrate north by the end of June and will head south again as early as September. This makes summer slower. Most of our reports are of dead marine mammals and sea turtles, with an occasional live porpoise, dolphin, whale, or sea turtle.

On June 18, we released our last gray seal, following rehabilitation in the Seal Rescue Clinic (SRC). Gray seals are commonly seen in Rhode Island. This was our second successful release in two weeks, which is very exciting for us.

We had 17 animals in the SRC this year. Fourteen seals were picked up by the MAIFE team and brought in for rehab, while three seals came from other rescue facilities. So far, we have released seven of this year's seals. Last year 20 seals were brought into the SRC; of those, nine were released. We have certainly had our hands full with seals and sighting calls!

We had 120 sighting calls this year. Most were in CT instead of RI, which is a change from previous years. This was more challenging for us, since many



Photo: Marine Animal Rescue Program

people in CT don't realize that there are seals in the Long Island Sound.

All but six of the seal calls were for ice seals (harp and hooded). As the number of ice seals in our region grows each year, public outreach becomes a bigger part of the job. Unlike regional seals, ice seals will not retreat to the water when approached, so people often think they are sick.

Now that we know we have ice seals visiting our waters from Canada, we are learning more about how their behavior differs from our regional seals. It is normal for seals to rest on land. While regional seals usually stay offshore and rest on land away from people, ice seals tend to lie on ice patches, beaches, lawns, boat ramps and docks, where it is far more likely that people will encounter them. As we continue to learn what brings marine mammals and sea turtles ashore, we use this information to improve the chances of survival for wild populations as well as those that require rehabilitation in the future.

Our volunteers are to be commended for their hard work, often under difficult circumstances. They provide whatever support is needed - preparing frozen fish in 35-degree weather, cleaning, hiking a mile on a beach to rescue a seal, and even retrieving and disposing of dead carcasses. They devote many hours to the animals and to the stranding program. Without their perseverance and dedication, this program would not function. THANK YOU ALL for your assistance!!

If you are interested in supporting the Marine Animal Rescue Program, MAIFE offers a Marine Animal Rescue Adoption Program. Each \$30 Adoption Kit helps us to care for the seals while they are in our Seal Rescue Clinic. For more information, email [animalparent@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:animalparent@mysticaquarium.org). Please specify that you are interested in information about the Marine Animal Rescue Program.

### Name-a-Dolphin Updates

DCP's Bimini Name-a-Dolphin program has proven to be so popular in the past year that we are currently scouring our past and present data to find more dolphins to include in the program! Between May 2004 and March 2005, 12 dolphins have been named and added to our adoption files for everyone to enjoy, bringing our current total up to 21. Dolphin Names cost \$250 and the program offers a unique opportunity for you to help sponsor our field research studying the spotted dolphins around Bimini, The Bahamas.

Thank you to all who have named a spotted dolphin from Bimini, The Bahamas in the past, and to all of you who have requested to name a dolphin in the last few weeks. We hope to have new dolphins available after the end of this summer's Bimini field season, but we ask that if you are interested in naming a dolphin, you contact us first at [dcp@mysticaquarium.org](mailto:dcp@mysticaquarium.org). For more info, visit <http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/Adopt.asp>.

### DCP Sponsorship Levels

The following list defines the benefits for each level of sponsorship of DCP:

- \$15 Student:** welcome packet
  - \$25 Individual:** welcome packet
  - \$35 Foreign:** welcome packet
  - \$45 Family:** 3 note cards, 3 postcards & welcome packet (note: family sponsors consist of 2 or more individuals living in the same household.)
  - \$75 Supporting:** A copy of *Dolphins* video (while supplies last, then a DCP season summary or *Dolphin Spirit* video), 3 note cards, 3 postcards & welcome packet
  - \$250 Contributing:** 1 DCP t-shirt, copy of *Dolphins* video (while supplies last, then a DCP season summary or *Dolphin Spirit* video), 3 note cards, 3 postcards & welcome packet
  - \$500 Patron:** Limited edition matted print suitable for framing, 1 DCP t-shirt, a copy of *Dolphins* video (while supplies last, then a DCP season summary or *Dolphin Spirit* video), 3 note cards, 3 postcards & welcome packet
  - \$1,000 Benefactor:** 20% discount for individual sponsors on a DCP Ecotour trip, limited edition matted print suitable for framing, 1 DCP t-shirt, a copy of *Dolphins* video (while supplies last, then a DCP season summary or *Dolphin Spirit* video), 3 note cards, 3 postcards & welcome packet
- Welcome Packet:* includes a welcome letter, DCP flyer, one-year subscription to the Dolphin Gazette, and a 10% discount on DCP-related merchandise.

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**Yes! I want to sponsor the work of the Dolphin Communication Project.**

I am a:                      New Sponsor                      Renewing Sponsor  
This is a:                      Gift Sponsorship

Please enroll me as a:

Student \$15	Supporting \$75	<b>I would like to offer an additional gift of:</b> \$_____.
Individual \$25	Contributing \$250	
Foreign Individual \$35 (outside USA)	Patron \$500	
Family \$45	Benefactor \$1,000	

***Sponsorships to the Dolphin Communication Project are for one year.***

My check made out to DCP/MAIFE is enclosed. (*Credit card payment is available online.*)

Please send my sponsorship package to:	If this is a gift, please note gift GIVER address:
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____	City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

<b>Yes! I want to Adopt a Dolphin!</b>			
Buster	Juliette	Niecey	Teardrops
Cerra	Leslie	Picky	Tina
Cleopatra	Lil Jess	Prince William	Vincent
Dolphin Dandy	Lone Star	Romeo	White Blotch
Finn	Lumpy	SplitJaw	
Freckles	Nemo	Swoosh	
<i>Circle your choice, fill out the information above &amp; send \$30.00 per adoption.</i>			
<i>Learn more about these dolphins at <a href="http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org">www.dolphincommunicationproject.org</a>!</i>			

The *Dolphin Gazette* is also available on-line at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/newsletter](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/newsletter).



**Videos**

*Dolphin Sense* \$25

*Dolphin Spirit* \$25

*Bridging the Ocean Divide* \$30

**DCP T-Shirts** \$15.00

**Eco-Tours** at Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences (RIMS) in Roatan, Honduras – see page 4 for information.

**Note cards** (\$2.50 each) & **Postcards** (\$1.00 each)

*Discounts are available for packets.*

***Thank you to DCP Volunteers!!***

Without your effort and assistance, DCP's office could not run so smoothly throughout the year. You all do a great job processing data and keeping things organized. Well done!

If you'd like to become a DCP volunteer, opportunities are always available for processing data and working with our video and sound files in our office. For more details, see the Education page on the DCP web site, or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at MAIFE. The Volunteer Coordinator can be reached at: 860-572-5955 x209. All DCP volunteers coordinate their time through the Volunteer Coordinator and Kathleen.

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To:



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