

# The Dolphin Gazette

Volume 10, issue 4 (November 2006)



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)

## In this issue:

- \* Pine Point Update
- \* DCP Programs
- \* Field Season - Final Reports
- \* Marine Animal Rescue Updates
- \* Just for Fun - Stories from John

## A Note From Kathleen:

Happy Autumn! This issue of the Dolphin Gazette is filled with details from each of our field seasons this year. We had wildly successful sessions in all four locations: Bimini and Nassau, The Bahamas; Mikura Island, Japan; and Roatan, Honduras. We collectively gathered almost 50 hours of video and audio data studying bottlenose and spotted dolphins in both the wild and in human care. Of course, all that data now needs to be processed, which Kristy, Darcie, Kelly, Justin and I are doing. The Marine Animal Rescue Program's Seal Rescue Clinic has been busy almost year-round. Their report highlights the hooded seals who have visited us. Our programs with Pine Point school are progressing well with 12 students from 4th and 5th grade participating in DCP's Youth Program. DCP is again offering ecotours to Roatan in September 2007 with dates on our web site. As we develop details for ecotours in Nassau, we will keep you posted. We round out this issue with the second part of John's story on Bimini.

Thank you very much for your continued support of DCP's research and education programs. Enjoy the coming holiday season!

Cheers  
Kathleen



## MySpace

DCP is now on MySpace! Check out our site and slideshows at [www.myspace.com/dolphincommunicationproj](http://www.myspace.com/dolphincommunicationproj)

## Dolphins: Up Close and Personal

Ever wonder how dolphins communicate with each other? Join Kathleen *live* as she narrates spectacular underwater footage from DCP research expeditions and answers your email questions. Tune in to [www.immersionpresents.org](http://www.immersionpresents.org) and click on "Channel". Upcoming dates include: December 4.

## DCP and KOL

Check out DCP on KOL! [www.kolexpeditions.com](http://www.kolexpeditions.com)

## PodCasts

DCP now offers free, downloadable PodCasts! We have video and audio PodCasts available at [www.thedolphinpod.com](http://www.thedolphinpod.com). Managed by Justin Gregg, who has also been producing our audio PodCasts, there is at least one new PodCast available each week. Check it out, and let us know what you think!

## Dolphin Sense

Renew your Dolphin Adoption by December 2006 and receive a copy of the DVD *Dolphin Sense*, produced by Terramar Productions. DCP has 25 dolphins available for adoption - see the full list at the end of the newsletter.



## DCP at Pine Point School

### 4th & 5th grade Stonington students:

Twelve local 4th & 5th grade students in the Stonington school district have taken part in DCP's *Youth Program*. Students are learning about dolphin behavior, communication, and how DCP collects video and audio data. On 12 November, participants spent an hour practicing with two MVAs at the local YMCA, as well as trying out various dolphin behaviors. For more information about upcoming educational programs, email [info@dolphincommunicationproject.org](mailto:info@dolphincommunicationproject.org).

### *EcoTours*



Darcie in Bimini



Photo: DE

Kel & Murray at DE



Photo: Joe Marino

Kel in Bimini

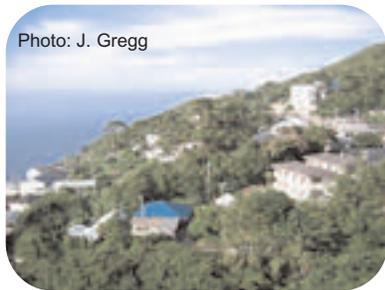


Photo: J. Gregg

Mikura Island, Japan



Photo: K. Melillo

Pec Pac on the right pectoral fin

### Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, Honduras:

Dates for DCP's 2007 EcoTour to RIMS have been set! Information is available at: <http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/ecotours.asp>. Contact Bill at [bsperling@idyllwild.com](mailto:bsperling@idyllwild.com) for more information or to sign up!

### Photography in Bimini, The Bahamas:

Would you like to swim with wild stingrays or get up close & personal with wild dolphins? How about exploring a shipwreck? These adventures and more await the handful of adventurous photographers who join John Anderson and Terramar Productions in Bimini, The Bahamas next spring/summer for a week of fun, photography, and snorkeling on the Grand Bahama Banks. Look for detailed info in the winter issue of the *Gazette*, at [www.terramarprods.com](http://www.terramarprods.com), or at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org).

### **Volunteering**

DCP accepts *local* volunteers for data analyses anytime during the year at our office in CT. We **DO NOT** accept volunteers for field work at any of our field sites. If you are interested in joining us in the field, check out our Ecotours. For more information, contact the Volunteer Coordinator at MAIFE at 860-572-5955 x209.



# End of Season Summaries

## MIKURA ISLAND, JAPAN

If you have been keeping abreast of the latest DCP news, you will probably remember that this past summer's Mikura Island research season went amazingly well. Forty-one trips yielded over 12 hours of video footage! I've been hard at work sifting through the video data, looking for clips that I can use for my own research project. It has been 4 months since I returned from Japan and I am still not finished! I've been keeping in touch with my Mikura friends and am looking forward to returning next summer. It is hard to find news about life on Mikura on the Internet – it is a secluded little island. The Mikura news never seems to make it onto CNN. I did manage to track down a website maintained by a friend of mine from Mikura where he posts daily weather reports and discusses important events. There are some excellent pictures of the spectacularly nasty winter weather that is engulfing the island. Here is the link: <http://diary3.cgiboy.com/2/mikura/>

What? You don't read Japanese? Well neither do I, really. Try translating the webpage using Google's webpage translation service: [http://www.google.com/language\\_tools?hl=en](http://www.google.com/language_tools?hl=en).

The translation will be bizarre, but it is better than Japanese characters! Anyhow, this should be enough to tide you over until next summer when our field reports will be back online!

Have a great winter!

**Justin**

Justin Gregg

DCP Research Associate



## *Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, Roatan, Honduras*

DCP visited the Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences (RIMS) in Honduras again this past September for 10 days of data collection, from 7-18 September 2006, on the communication among 14 bottlenose dolphins residing at Anthony's Key Resort. Eleven ecotourists joined us to assist with data collection and preliminary data processing: some of these volunteer assistants were repeat participants. We welcomed Quintin, Nancy, Sandra and Mathias back for another round of dolphin fun! Besides collecting 11 hours of video with stereo audio using the MVA4, we also completed four sessions of joint data collection with the MVA and MOSART tags. Gracie, a lively adult female, wore the pec pac, which housed the MOSART tags, on her right pectoral fin. Sessions ranged from 12 to 20 minutes in length with Gracie leaving Kathleen's view only a couple of times per session. Gracie's son Jack, Fiona, and Anthony all showed interest in the pac when Gracie wore her new "jewelry". The data collected with the MOSART tags are currently with Mats Amundin and Christer Blomqvist, collaborators with DCP from Sweden. They are examining the click data while we are focusing on the behavior and lower frequency signals. We also continued use of the echolocation click detector, or ECD. Ten hours of echolocation click data were collected and will be analyzed by Justin Gregg when data are exchanged between DCP team members.

I am using data in my study of pectoral fin use in the exchange of tactile behaviors between dolphins: a study comparing captive with wild dolphins represents a segment of this topic. Data collected at RIMS are also being used for the completion of requirements for a Master's course of study for two of DCP's research associates: Darcie Blanding at the University of Rhode Island and Kristy Beard at the University of Connecticut.

I will return to RIMS in September 2007. Spaces are available for the ecotour program offered by DCP. Check out the ecotour page on our website for more details, at: [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/ecotour](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/ecotour)

Cheers!

**Kathleen**

Kathleen Dudzinski

Director, DCP



## Dolphin Encounters, Nassau, The Bahamas

I completed DCP's second trip to Dolphin Encounters (DE) in Nassau this September. Kel flew over from Bimini to assist with a quick week of data collection (five days total), during which we recorded almost nine hours of video. Chippy and Aunty V both had their calves (the day we arrived and a week before, respectively), so we were able to swim with and record the mothers and their brand new calves! Like any good mothers, they kept their calves away from "strangers", but by the end of the week, the calves were determined to come by and check us and our crazy green camera out. We did get some good footage, as well as data for Darcie's thesis on calf association patterns.



Photo: K. Melillo

Kel and I also got to meet Murray, a male California sea lion, and 5 female California sea lions who were displaced after Hurricane Katrina and now call DE home. Murray was actually born at Mystic Aquarium 18 years ago - it never ceases to amaze me how small the world really is.

John also recently returned from a photo & video trip to Nassau, where he collected lots of great footage for upcoming video programs, PodCasts, and our upcoming Adopt-a-Dolphin program featuring the dolphins at DE. Look for information on all of our new programs on the website and in upcoming newsletters!

Until January,

*Kristy*

Kristy Beard  
DCP Project Assistant  
& Research Associate



Photo: A. Dean

## Bimini, The Bahamas

It's that time of year again, folks. As much as we hate to admit it, the Bimini field season has come to an end. We (Darcie and Kel) are back to classes, theses, cars, big grocery stores, movie theatres, and worst of all, the fast approaching winter. We did have a great 2006 field season. Keep reading for some highlights!

In 125 hurricane-free days in the field, we completed 55 boat trips with Bimini Undersea. These trips translate to over 233 hours of effort (time on the boat), 107 sightings (dolphins in view) and 53 encounters (swims greater than 3 minutes). We have 13 tapes on which video and acoustic data were recorded using the MVA2 and 4 tapes with video from DCP's smaller video housing.

Twenty-eight Atlantic spotted dolphins were re-sighted this season, and we were able to add two new dolphins to the spotted dolphin photo-ID catalog! A new catalog was also created, which includes 15 bottlenose dolphins identified in the waters surrounding Bimini. For those adoptive parents (past, present, and future) out there, here is a list of the dolphins we've seen: Buster (#04), Finn (#09), Romeo (#10), Vincent (#11), Juliette (#12), Tina (#14), Lumpy (#17), Split Jaw (#22), White Blotch (#29), Lil' Jess (#35), Swoosh (#36), Cerra (#38), Cleopatra (#41), Niecey (#48), Lone Star (#56), Billy (#64), Tim (#69), Nemo (#76), Leslie (#80), and Stefran (#82).

We were also able to host a course through Alaska Pacific University and visit the students in Grade 10 at Bimini All Ages School. Later in the summer, we were able to lend a hand with a local swim camp. Over 20 local children attended and learned not only how to swim, but also water safety and respect. We hope these children continue their interest in the ocean!

One of the great elements of our Bimini field season is our interaction with guests from around the world. Our weekly presentations and on-board conversations give us the opportunity to spread knowledge and share DCP's work with others. We'd like to thank all of the guests this summer for all that they brought to our field work and thank those who became Atlantic spotted dolphin parents through our Adopt-a-Dolphin program!

Finally, we'd like to thank all the people on Bimini who make our field work possible; from natives smiling on the street, to our landlord Mr. Ashley Saunders, and of course to the Bimini Undersea crew and family.

If you missed our field reports, they are still available at:

<http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/fieldreports/FieldReportsBimini2006.asp>

Until next year!

*Kel & Darcie*

Kelly Melillo and Darcie Blanding  
DCP Research Associates



# Bimini

Part 2 of a short story by John Anderson

(If you missed Part 1 of "Bimini" in the last issue of the *Gazette*, it is available online)

Dolphins aren't the only animals around Bimini that are habituated to humans. Southern stingrays can be found throughout the entire Bahamas archipelago as well as most of the US Eastern seaboard, but they seem to congregate in a small inlet of the Biminis called Honeymoon Harbor. These odd looking critters will actually seek out humans in this shallow bay; they are used to getting handouts of fish and squid, a free meal from snorklers. The stingrays will actually swim over your feet or up your leg and beg, like the family dog. It is true that their stinger can pack a mighty wallop, but respect and common sense are key to enjoying this wild encounter. While many of the stingrays seem perfectly happy to receive some pets on the back or fins during their free meal, I wouldn't encourage you to grab or step on them as you might just find out how fast they can and will defend themselves. You will get their point - pun intended. My visit to Honeymoon Harbor coincided with an incoming tide, 100+ feet of underwater visibility, cooperative animals, and a bright sunny day - all over a white sand bottom. Theoretically, when the moon and the stars and the planets all align, you and your equipment had better be ready. The two hours that I enjoyed swimming with the rays as a photographer were quite magical!

It was going to be hard to top my morning at Honeymoon Harbor, but I also wanted to stop by the Sapona on the way home. The Sapona, commissioned and built during World War I, was a United States liberty ship, one of about 17 made of concrete, that is living out her final days in a shallow, natural "dry dock" up on the Bimini banks as a popular snorkeling spot for tourists. She has a diverse history which includes many roles: a booze warehouse, almost a night club, a fishing barge, and a bombing target. Additionally, the Sapona makes a great location for a scene in any film production shot in the area. I visited once before, but had forgotten just how beautiful the lighting could be inside her. She sits in about 15 feet of water and is mostly open now, decayed and weathered from eight decades of hurricanes and the elements. Shafts of light penetrate her interior from the mid-day sun and the remains of her boilers and engines are still visible. Fish dart in and out of the dark grottos and snorkelers swim through what is left of her weathered bones. Her stern had broken off in a 1926 hurricane and remained at an odd angle to the rest of her hull until 2002, when another hurricane caused it to implode and sink into the sea as a crumbled pile of concrete. The Sapona still sits proud on the hard-pan bottom, where she grounded in 1924, her prow jutting some 40 feet towards the sky. Perhaps she has a secret to guard, or perhaps she has a secret that she has not yet told. It is rumored that she struck the submerged wreck of a Spanish galleon before she grounded. Anybody feeling lucky?

Each time I visit a Caribbean island I realize just how easily the thin veneer of civilization is stripped off the human animal. To indulge that little bit of pirate in me, that resides just beneath the surface, takes nothing more than a bit of imagination, a bit of time, and perhaps a bit of rum. I hope that future trips will bring me back to Bimini, but one thing is certain, my retirement will include the pursuit of the afore-mentioned gold doubloon. If I were honest, I'd admit that I don't really care whether I find it or not. Perhaps I should refer to my eventual retirement as my *repiratement!*



## Marine Animal Rescue Program

### Ice Seals in Connecticut and Rhode Island in August

This has been the longest seal season in MAIFE stranding history. The clinic used to close in June and not open again with an animal until December, January, or even late February. The last three years, we have had harbor seal pups from June until September, after our winter seals have been released which has caused the Seal Rescue Clinic (SRC) to extend its season. But, this year was exceptional because it was the first time we have had hooded seals (Arctic animals) in August. We had just gotten the last harbor seal pup out, and two days later we received our first hooded seal, with two more that followed in a span of a week.

Hooded seals are ice seals that usually visit offshore Connecticut and Rhode Island waters in the winter, but this year these seals have been seen in the summer on the shoreline beaches up and down the East coast. Cape Cod to Maine gets their share of hooded seals passing through each August. We had a healthy hooded seal last September in the Norwalk River, but this year hooded seals haven't been as healthy and there are more of them.

Biologists and researchers are baffled by the number of hooded seals seen within the past three months. North Carolina has seen more than one, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, the Cape, Maine, and New York have all received calls about these animals popping up and requiring rehabilitation.

There is little known about hooded seals since they live in Arctic regions north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence on offshore ice flows. No one really knows where they go in autumn and winter. Immature hooded seals may keep to deeper offshore waters for several years. Yearlings and juveniles have been known to wander large distances to feed, and have been found in places such as the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and even Portugal!

Hooded seals are born on the ice from mid-March to early April. They will nurse from their mothers for only four days - the shortest lactation period of any mammal! After four days, the mother will abruptly leave her pup, who has doubled in size since birth, and will never return. Much of the pups' remaining time on the ice is spent sleeping to conserve energy. The animal will live off the thick blubber layer that it built up from its mother's milk until the ice melts. When the ice breaks and melts in late April, the pup swims along feeding on small crustaceans and plankton, gaining weight yet again.

Pups and juveniles are called "bluebacks" due to their slate blue-grey colored back and cream colored bellies, and will shed this coat during their first molt, between June and August, at approximately 18 months of age. Adults have a smoky blue-grey coat dappled with irregular black blotches. Adult males have an inflatable "hood" on top of their forehead and will inflate and shake their "hood" in aggressive and defensive displays. This "hood" is what gives the animal its name. Hooded seals are very aggressive compared to other seal species. They will stay and defend themselves rather than retreating back to the water.

Of the three hooded seals that we had in the SRC, one came in from Connecticut, one from Rhode Island, and the third from a Delaware stranding facility. Delaware only has the capacity to hold their animals overnight, so they contacted MAIFE for assistance. The seal from Connecticut came in with two missing digits on its rear flipper, but the flipper has healed nicely and we're hoping for a release mid-November. The Rhode Island seal was rehabilitated at MAIFE and was released on October 10th. Unfortunately, she is now back in our rehab facility after being seen eating sand in Virginia. Once she is treated and we feel she is releasable, we will try again. Each animal that we rehabilitate and release is given a flipper tag with Mystic's phone number. She will be the first seal in our records to have restranded after release.

Since 1994, Mystic Aquarium has rehabilitated and released 10 hooded seals. On May 9, 2004, a hooded seal was released with a satellite tag, and we were able to track the animal and find out where it was for two months, losing transmission around the southern tip of Greenland.



## DCP Sponsorship Levels

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

**\$15 Student. \$25 Individual. \$35 Foreign.** all include a 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* on VHS (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* on VHS (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* on VHS (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* on VHS (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.

### 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  Family \$45  Contributing \$250  
 Individual \$25  Supporting \$75  Patron \$500  
 Foreign Individual \$35 (*outside USA*)  Benefactor \$1000

I would like to offer an additional gift of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to adopt a dolphin: \$30 \_\_\_\_\_ Dolphin name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Adoptions & Sponsorships with the Dolphin Communication Project are for one year.*

My check made out to DCP is enclosed. (Credit card payment is available online or by phone.)

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Yes! I want to Adopt a Dolphin!

Buster	Juliette	Niecey	Swoosh
Cerra	Leslie	Padre	Stefran
Cleopatra	Lil' Jess	Picky	Teardrops
Dolphin Dandy	Lone Star	Prince William Joseph	Tim
Finn Cusimano	Lumpy	of Wyckoff	Tina
Freckles	Nemo	Romeo	Vincent
		SplitJaw	White Blotch

Circle your choice, fill out the information above & send \$30.00 per adoption.  
Learn more about these dolphins at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org)!



# Other Ways to Support DCP

## DVDs

*Bridging the Ocean Divide* ~~\$30~~ \$19.95 + \$4.95 S&H

*Dolphin Spirit* VHS ~~\$25~~ \$9.95 + Free Shipping!

**Note cards** \$2.50 each/ 3 for \$6

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

**DCP T-Shirts** \$15 + \$4.95 S&H

**DCP Long Sleeve Shirt** \$20 + \$4.95 S&H

**Eco-Tours** at Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences (RIMS) in Roatan, Honduras, our new program at Dolphin Encounters, Nassau, The Bahamas for long weekends in January 2007.

*Please send check or money order to DCP. Products can be purchased through PayPal at [www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/support.asp](http://www.dolphincommunicationproject.org/support.asp). For more information, email [info@dolphincommunicationproject.org](mailto:info@dolphincommunicationproject.org).*

*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 may be available for processing data and working with DCP's 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 at: 860-572-5955 x209. All DCP volunteers coordinate their time through the Volunteer Coordinator and Kristy.

## Internships:

Internships are available with DCP for Spring and Summer 2007. Applications can be found at: <http://www.mysticaquarium.org/index.cgi/788>.

**Dolphin Communication Project  
Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration  
55 Coogan Blvd.  
Mystic, CT 06355**

To:

