

Akvamarin

Annual Magazine of the Blue World Institute of Marine Research & Conservation

2011



Dolphin Day Winning Drawing 2011: Ivan Grgić, aged 10, Zagreb



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Dear Friends

I am particularly happy to have this opportunity to greet you from the pages of another Akvamarin. In this introductory section I will briefly present to you what we were occupied with throughout the year. To start, I'd like to mention that we are extremely pleased with the large number of school and kindergarten groups which visited us to participate in our lectures and workshops. This was the busiest year yet for groups in the centre. In June the Blue World Youth Club was founded in Rijeka to help develop programmes about biodiversity and environmental conservation for elementary and high school students. If you live or work around Rijeka and would like to join please contact me.

Concerning the field work, our research activities continued and it was a great year. This past season we didn't have any difficulties in finding dolphins: during 70 trips on the sea we found them 86 times. Furthermore, this year my colleagues Nikolina and Grga were instructors for training researchers in Albania and Montenegro. Blue World is a recognised regional trainer for the Adriatic sea which highlights the professionalism in studying and protecting of these amazing marine animals.

In addition to the usual research and educational activities some events will certainly be remembered. One of them is of course the observation of the monk seal on the 24th of June off the western coast of the island of Cres. The Mediterranean monk seal is one of the most endangered marine mammals and probably the rarest seal species in the world. So, it's always a welcome guest in the Adriatic Sea. During this sighting underwater film was recorded, and this individual is most likely an adult female which was observed also last year in the area of cape Kamenjak in Istria.

During this research season, we

received two reports of a whale, in mid-July in Rijeka Bay and in early October near the bridge of Pag. Although one of the observations was accompanied with a amateur footage of the whale, it wasn't possible to confirm the species with any certainty. However, we assume that in both cases it was a fin whale - *Balaenoptera physalus*.

In mid-summer the residents of Osor on the island of Cres informed us about the presence of the solitary bottlenose dolphin in the harbour. Dolphin encounters in the ports are not rare - healthy animals can leave the port just as well as how they entered, and it is best not to disturb them. Thanks to your calls we had two injured sea turtles for recovery, and one of them was sent to the aquarium in Pula, the other was released after some recuperation time.

This year the 19th Dolphin Day was organized on the 1st of July, 2011, this will be the new date for this celebration for the coming years. Despite the change of the date, the response of visitors and participants of this year's Dolphin Day exceeded our expectations.

In the Lošinj Marine Educational Centre, beside its permanent exhibition, this summer it has hosted two very interesting photo exhibitions. Visitors had the opportunity to see the island through the lens of Igor Čavlek, the author of the exhibition "Around the island". And later in the summer the members of the Lošinj Photo club, presented the exhibition titled "The Island".

Finally, a warm thanks to all our donators, adopters and volunteers, whose support every year enables us to continue with research and protection of dolphins in the Adriatic Sea. If you have not done it already we invite you to visit us, and until then enjoy this new issue of Akvamarin.

Best regards!

Mateja Zekan

Where are they now?

Santiago



Despite its male name, when we first met this year in July, Santiago surprised us by having a newborn calf by her side. We met them near the island of Oruda and the tiny fin of Santiago's newborn was hardly even noticed on the surface close to its mother's body. Shortly after that we saw them again in Lošinj Channel, between the island of Orjule and Veli Lošinj, in a large group of about two dozen dolphins. Besides Santiago, the group included other moms from the area of Kvarnerić that are well-known to us, including Quiz and Quizson. Females of bottlenose dolphins appear frequently together. Adult females then help each other in the group by watching their offspring when the mother decides to separate for a little time to search for prey.

The last time we met Santiago was near the island of Silba with dolphins Tanja and her calf while feeding on fish behind the trawler. Our presence did not hinder their activity. They appeared regularly on the surface with their calves curious glancing at us and Santiago's newborn treated us with a particularly interesting jump.



Jop

This year we met Jop four times. We first met this 'teenage' dolphin in the company of his mother in July in a large group of 35 dolphins near the island of Prvić. That was also the first encounter with Jop we recorded in the Velebit Channel. Shortly thereafter, we noticed him immediately when sailing from the port of Veli Lošinj, accompanied by another 30 or so dolphins. Some of them, like Mirna's and Celina's offspring are Jop's good friends. They are often together in the group, and very often come close to our research boat, which gives us a chance to make good photos of their dorsal fins for their identification later. Young dolphins typically do not have significant notches or markings on their fins, so it is very important to document even their smallest changes with good photos.

Every time we meet a large group, our eyes always look for Jop's fin, and when we finally see it, everyone is very excited. In August we saw him near the island of Morovnik and again in September in the very heart of our research area, near the islet of Kozjak.

Ivan



We met Ivan twice this year. The first time we saw him in a group of 14 dolphins near the islet of Kozjak close to Lošinj Island. With him in the group were Lily, Elmar, Quirin, and Nataša with her baby. As usual, he delighted us with his playful behaviour and stunts.

Next time we met him only in early October, near the Island Zečevo in the Velebit Channel. And this is when Ivan proved to be an extremely sociable dolphin. He came to our boat watching us curiously. His regular shaped fin, which still has the recognisable white stripe, this year got two new small knicks in the middle.

He was regularly seen in a group this year swimming with Vivian, Tijana and her calf. We hope soon to have another chance to enjoy his company and that he will take some time to entertain us with his dynamic and playful character.



Tac

This year we were a little bit worried because we did not see Tac until October. And then, in an interval of 7 days, we observed her in two very remote locations just within the border of the research area. We first met at the island Zečevo in Velebit channel in a group of 40 dolphins. Beside her was her calf from 2008 that socialized with other 'teenagers' in the group. He delighted us with a tireless exhibition of acrobatics. Next time we encountered her in the southeastern part of the research area, accompanied by Allison and her calf Indy. On that occasion they were feeding behind a trawler with Tac's and Alison's calves repeatedly approaching us and for a time surfing the bow wave of our research boat.

Tac is one of the rare dolphins whose dorsal fin has remained almost unchanged. There is a visible white line in the form of a lightning bolt which makes her easy to identify on the sea. We hope next year we have more opportunity to socialize with our Tac.



Meta

We've known Meta for years now. He's always been very friendly and gregarious, usually seen with his gang: Mush, Lily, Maestral, Duje and Šime. This year however, we noticed that Meta matured. He is now calmer, swimming aside of the group, as if he does not need to prove himself anymore with fighting and jumping.

We've seen him mostly in the area just in front of Veli Lošinj. Although not so playful anymore, he would still approach our boat to check us out and then continue with fishing.

Mush



Mush is one of the most resident dolphins in our area. We still find him regularly in the Lošinj archipelago. After all, this is where all his friends are. This year we saw him around islands of Oruda, Palacol and Orjule, but also just in front of Veli Lošinj where he was fishing together with other males.

On one occasion he surprised us with several high jumps, merely meters from our boat. Moments later, as other dolphins approached from the distance, we realized he was calling them. There was probably a large school of fish beneath the boat and Mush decided to share it with his friends.



Sonja

Sonja is one of those dolphins that surprises us. Most dolphins prefer certain areas, but she can be seen from as far north as Krk island to the most southern part of our study area, around islands of Silba, Olib and Molat. She obviously travels great distances, but is always in groups with other females and often offering babysitting service to them.

Since we don't see her as often as other resident dolphins, it is always a pleasant surprise to see her long and thin dorsal fin, which makes her so easily recognizable.

Debby



To us Debby is something like a gentle giant. She is a huge dolphin with very long dorsal fin and very dark body coloration. When observed in a group of dolphins she is definitely distinctive and often, to us, recognizable even from the distance simply for her impressive size.

In 2011 we saw her mostly in the central part of our study area in groups of nurturing mothers with calves. Although her calf Minkie from 2006 matured and separated, she still does not have a new one on her own, but is rather a dedicated baby sitter to other calves. This is how she shows gentle and helpful nature.

Nikolina Rako & Grgur Pleslić



Blue World is an independent, non profit organisation financed through adoptions, sponsorships and donations. If you would like more information about our work please check our website, or contact us directly:

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Volunteering at Blue World - 12 days working with us...

From May to October there is the possibility to spend 12 days working with us in Veli Lošinj, participating in the research, helping out in the centre and, of course, on the boat. This season, we had 23 Volunteers spending their holiday with us from all over the world, including Egypt, Portugal, Lebanon and the United States.

Now, what can you expect as a volunteer at Blue World? Well, there are a lot of different possibilities. If the weather is fine, which means almost no wind, the volunteers go out with the research team to find dolphins. When they find dolphins, volunteers take important data like GPS position, time and sea state. Trips with the boat can take up to 8 hours, depending on the area of research and the number of dolphins found. Of course the boat trips are the preferred program of volunteers, since there is no other way to get closer and experience the special moment of seeing wild dolphins. If the weather is not fine, researchers and volunteers work in the centre, entering and analyzing data about the dolphins.

But there can also be special work for the volunteers. At the beginning of July for example, there is the famous 'Dolphin Day' in Veli Lošinj. Volunteers help with the activities of the day, such as supervising kids drawing and painting, giving information to visitors and helping the team of Blue World. Also, last year for example, there was a solitary dolphin swimming for several days really close to the shore in Osor, 25 km from Veli Lošinj. In this case volunteers were responsible for public awareness and education, giving brochures with information about the dolphin and a code of conduct, as dolphins are a protected species in Croatia. In August, the researchers of Blue World

found an injured loggerhead turtle. Volunteers helped to take care of the turtle which was released after recuperating.

Although it may seem like no holiday, volunteers still have a lot of free time to enjoy the island, its beaches or do some trekking tours, either on their own or with the researchers. If there is the possibility, volunteers are shown the island including the Vulture Rescue Centre in Beli, the beautiful and romantic village Valun or the spectacular view of Lubenice all on the island of Cres.

This year, one volunteer group climbed Osorščica Mountain (588m) which has an impressive view over the surrounding islands, reward for the suffering from the climb. Also, volunteers can always have a day off; volunteering at Blue World is still a holiday and should be seen as the possibility to help, to learn and to experience something special, our wild dolphins.

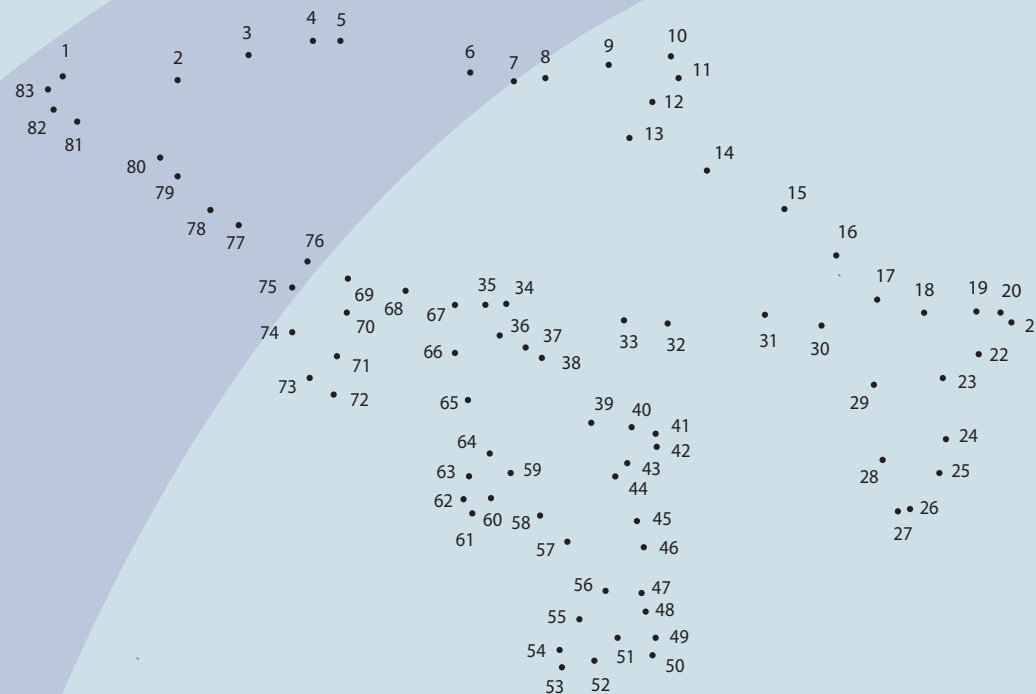
Volunteering is one of the main methods to support our research. By joining our program volunteers help to continue the research and protection of the dolphins in the Croatian Adriatic. For more details check out:

<http://www.blue-world.org/en/get-involved/volunteer/>

Annika Batel
(that's me in the shades)



Kids Corner



Connect the dots and see who is in the picture

