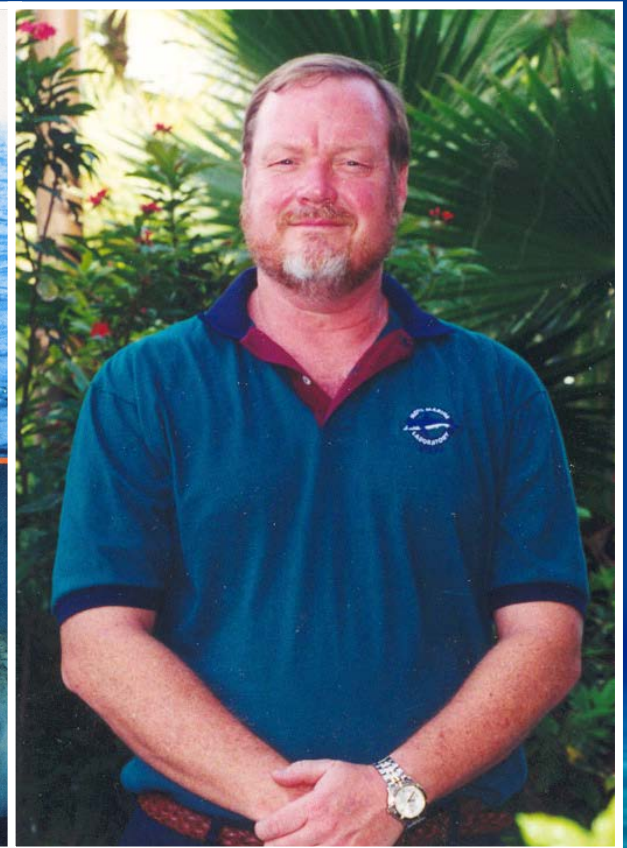
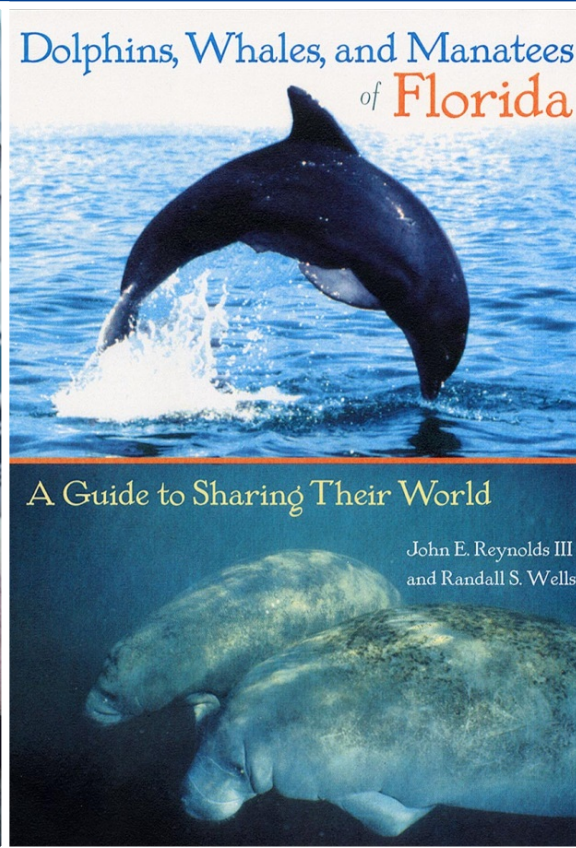


Many thanks to John Reynolds for helping us to better understand conservation of marine mammals – for providing much-needed guidance on sharing their world...



# LONG-TERM RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS – VALUE AND CHALLENGES

Randall Wells, Director,  
Sarasota Dolphin Research Program



Chicago Zoological Society

Senior Conservation  
Scientist - Conservation,  
Education & Training Group



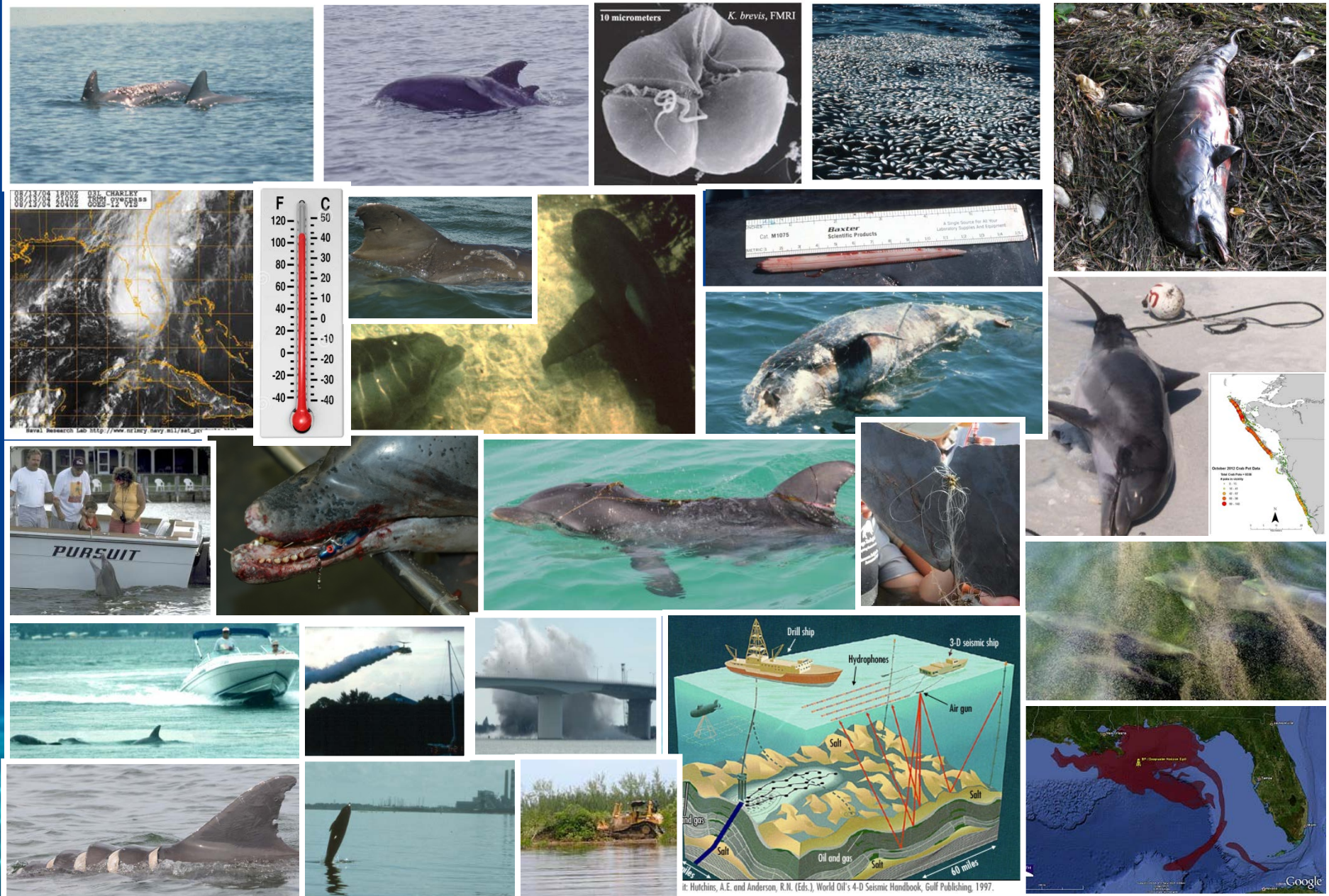
Adjunct Professor of Marine  
Mammal Science, Department  
of Large Animal Clinical  
Studies, College of Veterinary  
Medicine

Gretchen Lovewell,  
Program Manager,  
Stranding Investigations  
Program (appearing here as  
alter-ego, Reina Terror Torres)





# Florida's dolphins face a wide variety of concurrent and cumulative natural and anthropogenic threats – conservation efforts are needed





## **Conservation is often an ongoing, iterative process, combining research and action:**

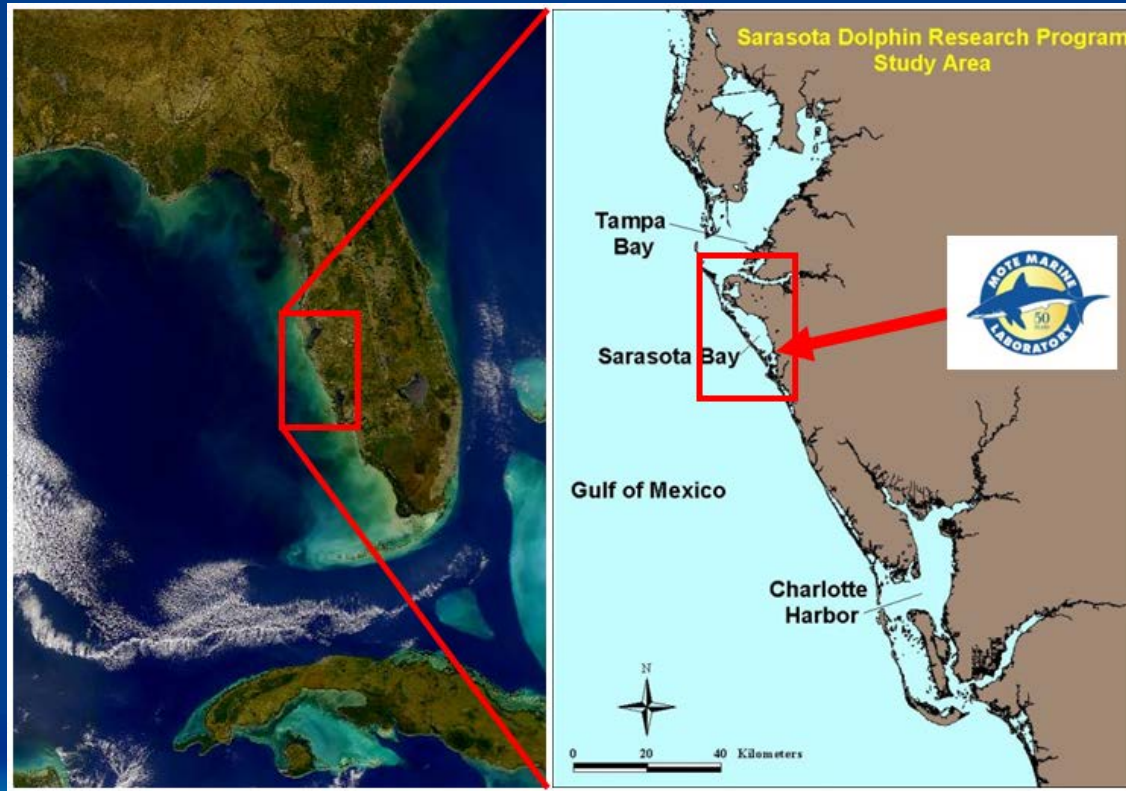
- 1. Identify and characterize the issue.**
- 2. Develop and implement conservation measures.**
- 3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the conservation measures.**
- 4. Refine/revise conservation actions to better address the issue.**
- 5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 as necessary...**



**Conservation of long-lived species can require and/or benefit from long-term research.**



# Along the central west coast of Florida, a collaborative effort between the Chicago Zoological Society and Mote Marine Laboratory works to study bottlenose dolphins from “cradle to grave” and tries to mitigate conservation issues



**Sarasota  
Dolphin Research  
Program:  
initiated in 1970**

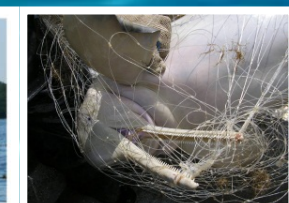
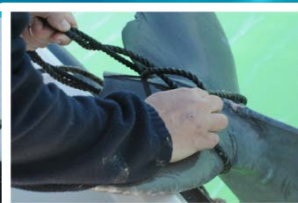
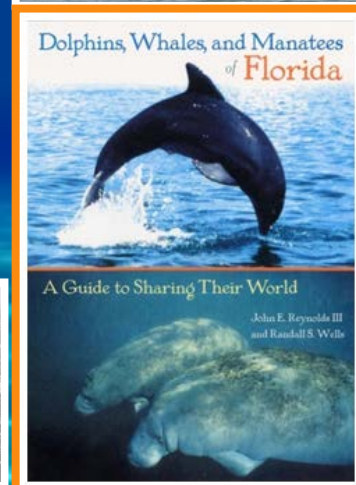


**Stranding  
Investigations  
Program:  
initiated in 1985**



# Sarasota Dolphin Research Program: Primary Activities

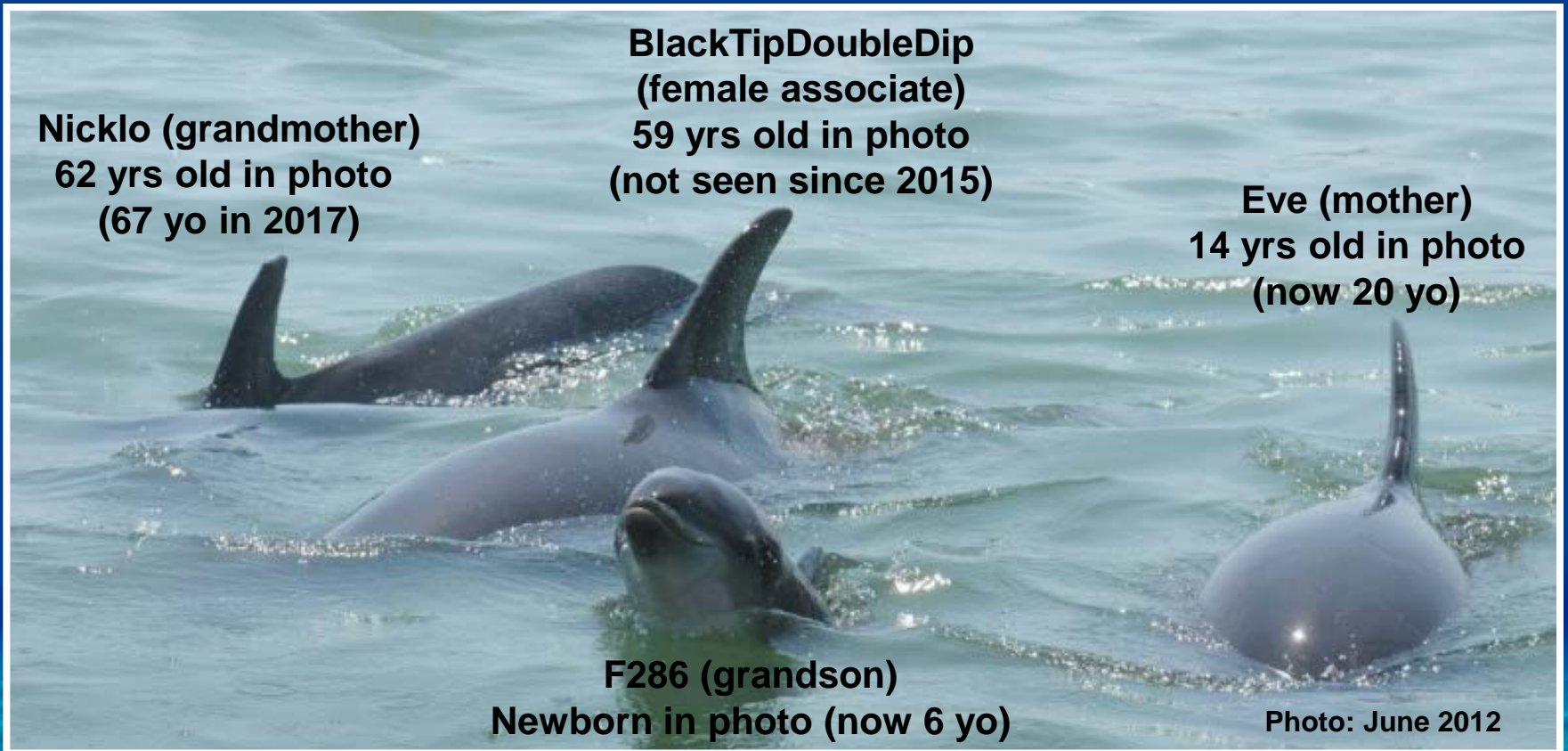
1. Photographic identification surveys: monitoring and surveillance
2. Capture-release: health assessment, life history
3. Biopsy dart sampling: population structure
4. Behavioral observations, acoustics
5. Telemetry development and application
6. Rescues and interventions
7. Post-intervention follow-up monitoring
8. Ecological perspective: fish surveys, shark tracking, red tide monitoring
9. Training of students and professionals
10. Outreach and education
11. Conservation service: panels, working groups, consultations





# Multi-decadal, multi-generational, year-round resident community of bottlenose dolphins in Sarasota Bay

Spans up to 5 concurrent generations, with individuals up to 67 yrs old



**Nicklo (grandmother)**  
62 yrs old in photo  
(67 yo in 2017)

**BlackTipDoubleDip**  
(female associate)  
59 yrs old in photo  
(not seen since 2015)

**Eve (mother)**  
14 yrs old in photo  
(now 20 yo)

**F286 (grandson)**  
Newborn in photo (now 6 yo)

Photo: June 2012



# Mote Marine Laboratory's Stranding Investigations Program

Graphic is through 2016 – 19 more cetaceans in 2017

## THE STRANDING INVESTIGATIONS PROGRAM (SIP) & THE DOLPHIN, WHALE & SEA TURTLE HOSPITALS

**1985**

SIP PROGRAM  
ESTABLISHED

**975**

INJURED, SICK OR DECEASED

SEA TURTLES  
RESPONDED TO OR RECOVERED  
IN TEN YEARS ALONE



2006 - 2016

2017

667 DOLPHIN & WHALE STRANDINGS RESPONDED TO

**560+**

SEA TURTLES



TREATED SINCE 1995

*including*

100+ TURTLES WITH  
PAPILLOMA TUMORS

**70+**

DOLPHINS



TREATED SINCE 1992

*learn more at* **MOTE.ORG**



# Stranding data help to identify conservation issues

## Carcass recovery, examination, sampling, UME detection, diet



MARINE MAMMAL SCIENCE, 24(4): 774-794 (October 2008)  
 © 2008 by the Society for Marine Mammalogy  
 DOI: 10.1111/j.1748-7692.2008.00212.x



### Consequences of injuries on survival and reproduction of common bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) along the west coast of Florida

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DEBORAH A. FAUQUIER  
 NÉLIO B. BARROS  
 RUTH E. DELYNN  
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MICHAEL D. SCOTT  
 Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission,  
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 La Jolla, California 92038, U.S.A.



MARINE MAMMAL SCIENCE, 31(1): 355-368 (January 2015)  
 © 2014 Society for Marine Mammalogy  
 DOI: 10.1111/mms.12142

### Carcass-recovery rates for resident bottlenose dolphins in Sarasota Bay, Florida

RANDALL S. WELLS<sup>1</sup> and JASON B. ALLEN, Sarasota Dolphin Research Program, Chicago Zoological Society, % Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A.; GRETCHEN LOVIEWELL, Stranding Investigations Program, Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A.; JAY GORZELANY, Stranding Investigations Program, Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A. and Sea-to-Shore Alliance, 4411 Bee Ridge Road #490, Sarasota, Florida 34233, U.S.A.; RUTH E. DELYNN and DEBORAH A. FAUQUIER, Stranding Investigations Program, Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A.; NÉLIO B. BARROS,<sup>2</sup> Sarasota Dolphin Research Program, Chicago Zoological Society, % Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A. and Stranding Investigations Program, Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, U.S.A.

Wildlife managers tasked with understanding mortality patterns and survivorship for populations of concern can glean much information from carcasses. Determination of cause of death and how mortalities are distributed across populations and life history classes can play a crucial role in directing conservation action (Byrd *et al.* 2008). The ability to detect and recover carcasses, and the condition of the carcass upon recovery, depend greatly on the animals' body composition, habits and habitat (Williams *et al.* 2011, Peltier *et al.* 2012). Carcasses obtained from fisheries monitored by dedicated observers provide clear indications of sources of mortalities (e.g., Palka and Rossman 2001). Data from carcasses of stranded cetaceans have become increasingly important in recent years, particularly since fishery observer coverage is declining or nonexistent<sup>3</sup> (Byrd *et al.* 2008).

The marine environment presents particular challenges for detecting and examining cetacean carcasses when they are not obtained directly from fisheries. While some

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author (e-mail: rwells@mote.org).

<sup>2</sup>Deceased.

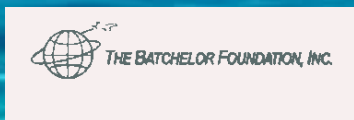
<sup>3</sup>Personal communication from Liam Engleby, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, November 2013.



# Conservation Challenge/Solution: One of the biggest challenges to successful conservation of Florida's dolphins:

\$\$\$ - predictable support is required to maintain consistent and continuous operations to conduct the long-term work necessary to develop, implement, assess, and adapt conservation programs for long-lived animals.

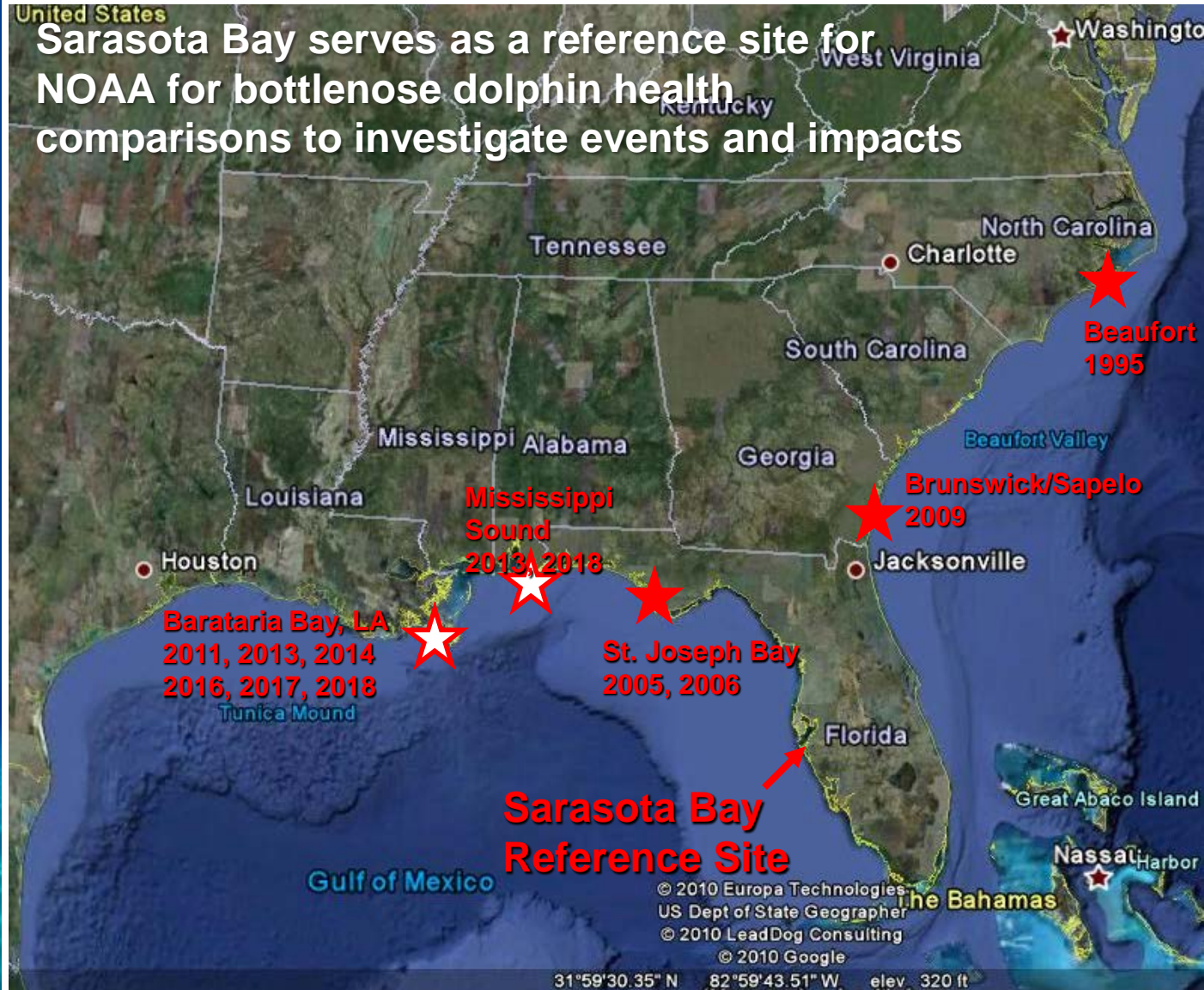
Our solution: We have had to be creative and persistent to find support for nearly five decades of work...we are grateful for the support of these entities, among others:





**With this support, the combined efforts of the CZS Sarasota Dolphin Research Program and the MML Stranding Investigations Program have the goal of enhancing protection of dolphin populations, and involve:**

# Conservation Activity #1: The establishment of a reference population for comparative investigations of at-risk populations elsewhere.





# Conservation Activity #2: Development of reference health parameter values.

Long-term health monitoring, large sample sizes, repeated sampling, availability of stranders, facilitate developing reference ranges.

## Since 1988:

- 274 individuals examined, sampled in Sarasota.
- Up to 17 re-captures (over decades).
- 841 sets of samples for blood chemistry and hematology, urinalysis, serology, biotoxins, microbiology, inorganic/organic contaminants.
- 838 sets of measurements of weight, blubber depth, and/or morphometrics.
- >100 peer-reviewed scientific publications on health, physiology, contaminants.

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Vol. 18: 63–68, 2013  
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127432

AQUATIC BIOLOGY  
Aquatic Biol

Published online: March 5

## Reference ranges for body condition in wild bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus*

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<sup>1</sup>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Hollings Marine Laboratory, 331 Fort Johnson Road, Charleston, South Carolina 29412, USA  
<sup>2</sup>Chicago Zoological Society, c/o Mote Marine Laboratory, 1600 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 34236, USA

**ABSTRACT:** Marine mammal body condition, as evaluated by a combination of mass, length, and/or girth measurements, is considered an indicator of nutritional status. We used measurements of total mass, total length, and maximum girth from long-term bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* capture-release research conducted in Sarasota Bay, Florida, USA, (1987 to 2009) to develop 95th percentile reference ranges for 2 body condition models: (1) total mass versus total length and (2) maximum girth versus total length. We used these models to evaluate the body condition of individual dolphins. Our results indicate that body condition of individual dolphins varies seasonally and among populations. The health of coastal populations.

**KEY WORDS:** Marine mammal, Mass, Girth, Length, Condition

[Biodidit.org](#)

### INTRODUCTION

Body size and growth in marine mammals have been assessed using a variety of methods including direct measurements of total mass (Lockyer & Morris 1987, Pauly 1987, 2011), body volume and mass based auxiliary girth (Finney et al. 1981, Ca 1993), weight-to-length ratio (Ridgway Mueller et al. 2011), blubber mass (Blair et al. 2000), and measurements from aerial photographs (Miller et al. 2012). Direct measurements of body size, however, body size is fused with estimates of body condition, which is often evaluated using



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Adrenal Hormones in Common Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): Influential Factors and Reference Intervals

Leslie B. Hart<sup>1\*</sup>, Randall S. Wells<sup>2</sup>, Nick Keller<sup>3</sup>, Brian C. Balmer<sup>4,5</sup>, Akira A. Hohn<sup>6</sup>, Stephen V. Lamb<sup>7</sup>, Teri Rowles<sup>8</sup>, Eric S. Zolman<sup>9</sup>, Lori H. Schwacke<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Hollings Marine Laboratory, Charleston, South Carolina, United States of America, <sup>2</sup> Chicago Zoological Society, c/o Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, Florida, United States of America, <sup>3</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Beaufort, North Carolina, United States of America, <sup>4</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, Beaufort, North Carolina, United States of America, <sup>5</sup> Animal Health Diagnostic Center, Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, New York, United States of America, <sup>6</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States of America.

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### OPEN ACCESS

**Citation:** Hart LB, Wells RS, Keller N, Balmer BC, Hohn AA, Lamb SV, et al. (2013) Adrenal Hormones in Common Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): Influential Factors and Reference Intervals. *PLOS ONE* 18(3): e0127432. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127432

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

**Funding:** Funding was provided from the Office of Naval Research's Marine Mammals & Biogeo Program.

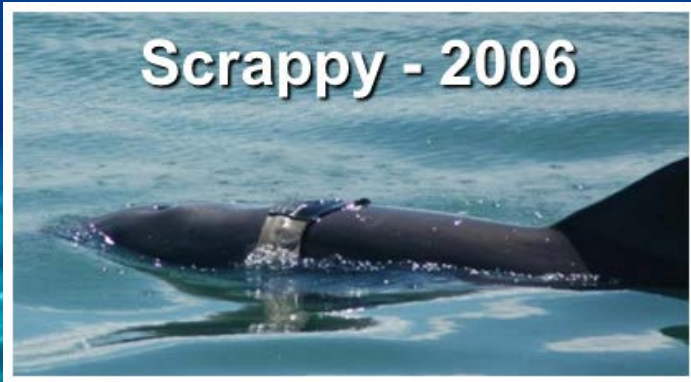
**Competing Interests:** The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

### Abstract

Inshore common bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) are exposed to a broad spectrum of natural and anthropogenic stressors. In response to these stressors, the mammalian adrenal gland releases hormones such as cortisol and aldosterone to maintain physiological and biochemical homeostasis. Consequently, adrenal gland dysfunction results in disruption of hormone secretion and an inappropriate stress response. Our objective here was to develop diagnostic reference intervals (DRIs) for adrenal hormones commonly associated with the stress response (i.e., cortisol, aldosterone) that account for the influence of intrinsic (e.g., age, sex) and extrinsic (e.g., time) factors. Ultimately, these reference intervals will be used to gauge an individual's response to capture stress and could indicate adrenal abnormalities. Linear mixed models (LMMs) were used to evaluate demographic and sampling factors contributing to differences in serum cortisol and aldosterone concentrations among bottlenose dolphins sampled in Sarasota Bay, Florida, USA (2000–2012). Serum cortisol concentrations were significantly associated with elapsed time from initial stimulation to sample collection ( $p < 0.05$ ), and DRIs were constructed using nonparametric methods based on elapsed sampling time for dolphins sampled in less than 30 minutes following net deployment (95th DR:  $0.91–4.21 \mu\text{g/dL}$ ) and following biological sampling aboard a research vessel (95th DR:  $2.32–6.06 \mu\text{g/dL}$ ). To examine the applicability of the pre-sampling cortisol DRIs across multiple estuarine stocks, data from three additional southeast U.S. sites were compiled, revealing that all of the dolphins sampled from the other sites ( $N = 34$ ) had cortisol concentrations within the 95th percentile DR. Significant associations between serum concentrations of aldosterone and variables reported in previous studies (i.e., age, elapsed sampling time) were not observed in the current project ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, approximately 16%



# Conservation Activity #3: Surveillance, facilitating discovery of disease, condition changes and injuries, as well as timely detection of situations (e.g., entanglements) that would benefit from interventions.



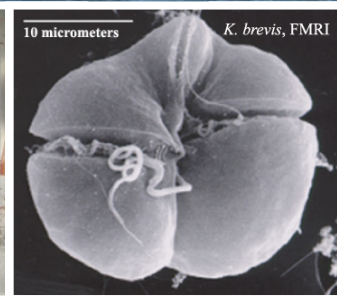


# Conservation Activity #4: Compilation of long-term datasets on dolphins, prey, predators, and environmental variables for trend detection.

Opportunistic observations, systematic observations, stomach contents, prey sampling, shark tracking, red tide monitoring



Dr. Nelio Barros: 1960-2010





# Conservation Activity #5: Archiving of biological samples for subsequent analyses including retrospective studies as new concerns emerge and new assays are developed.



MARINE MAMMAL SCIENCE, 12(4):499-515 (October 1996)  
© 1996 by the Society for Marine Mammalogy

## MORBILLIVIRUS INFECTION IN BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS: EVIDENCE FOR RECURRENT EPIZOOTICS IN THE WESTERN ATLANTIC AND GULF OF MEXICO

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University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1, Canada

### ABSTRACT

Morbillivirus infection is widespread among odontocetes of the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. Serologic evidence of infection in bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*, was first detected during an epizootic along the



# Conservation Activity #6: Opportunities to test or refine new approaches, tools, and techniques.



Pneumotach Respirometry  
(TAMUCC/WHOI)

Metabolic Rates



Doubly-labeled water (UCSC)



Overhead  
Body  
Condition  
Imaging  
(Duke/WHOI)



Hearing  
(USF)



X-Rays (UF)



DTAG  
(WHOI/USA/  
SMRU)



Breath  
Analysis  
(UCD)



Satellite-linked TDR Tag  
& Attachment Tests



# Conservation Activity #7: Maintaining rescue readiness with a trained team and equipment.

Able to engage in interventions upon request/approval by NOAA



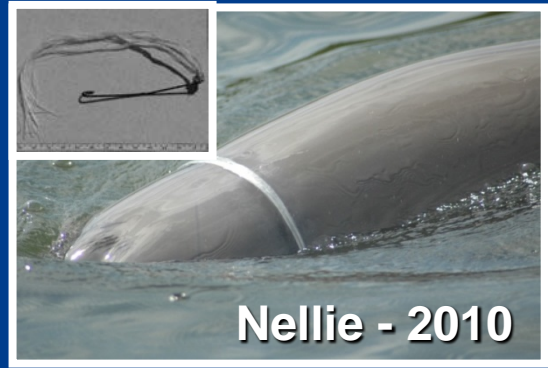
Ginger - 2008



FB28 - 2007



FMMSN1319-2013



Nellie - 2010



Vidalia - 2011

NOAA Permit 16299



Skipper - 2014



Speedy-2014



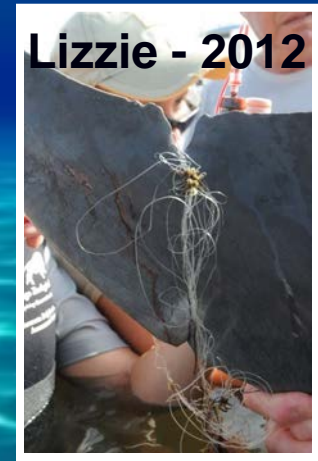
Parcel-2015



Scrappy - 2006



Toro - 2004



Lizzie - 2012



Placida - 2003



Bill-2016



# Conservation Activity #8: Training personnel to build conservation capacity in other regions/countries.

e.g., Franciscana tagging and tracking in Argentina and Brazil

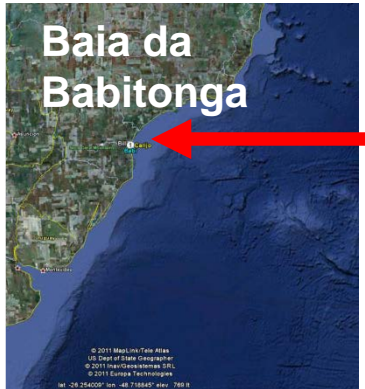


Wells, R. S., P. Bordino and D. C. Douglas. 2013. Patterns of social association in Franciscanas, *Pontoporia blainvillei*. *Marine Mammal Science*.

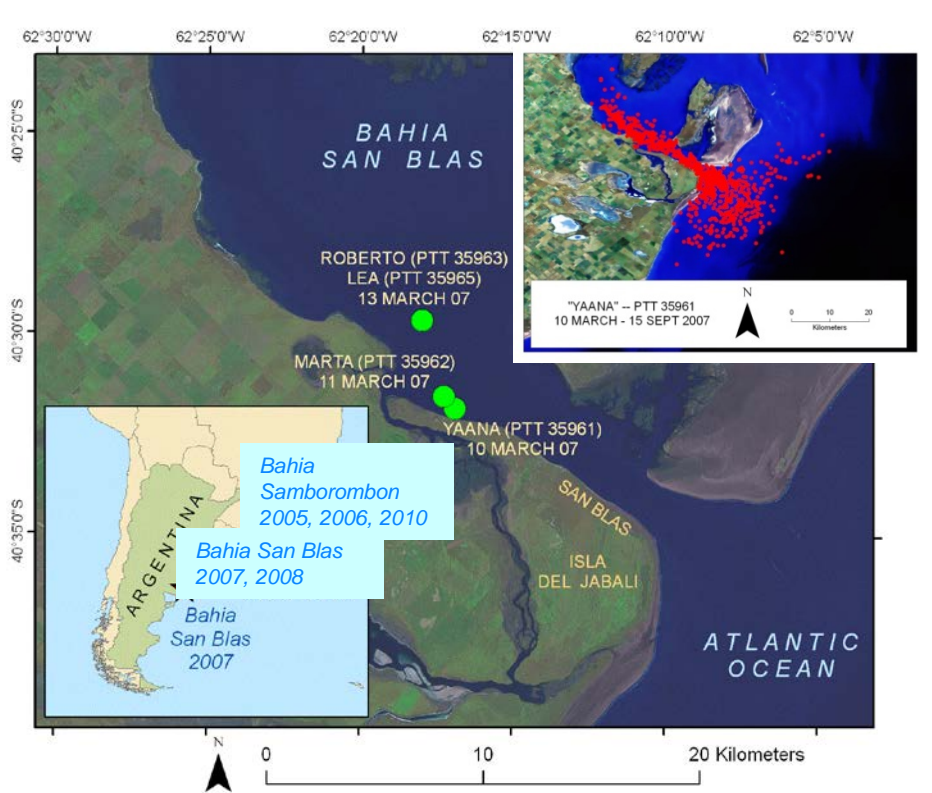
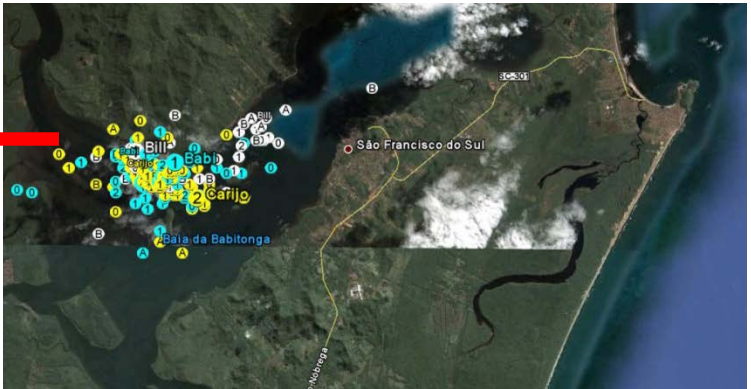


Brazil

Tri-National Research Team

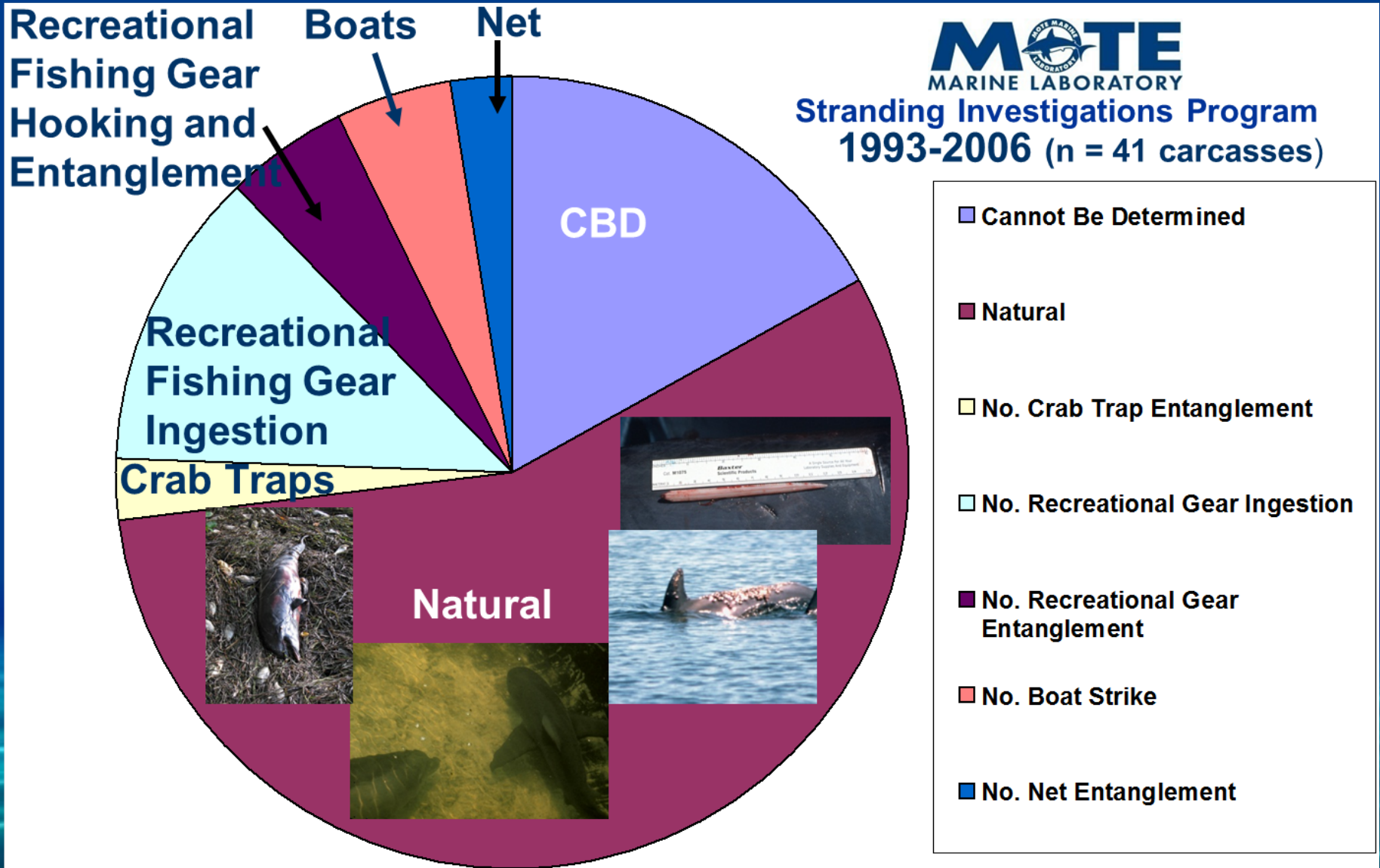


Baía da Babitonga



# Conservation Activity #9: Identifying relative contributions of different sources of mortality and serious injury.

From observations/strandings: 33% of losses recovered as carcasses





# Conservation Challenge: Human Interactions are a large and increasing threat to dolphins in Sarasota.

## Exacerbated by illegal provisioning, and interactions with bait/catch

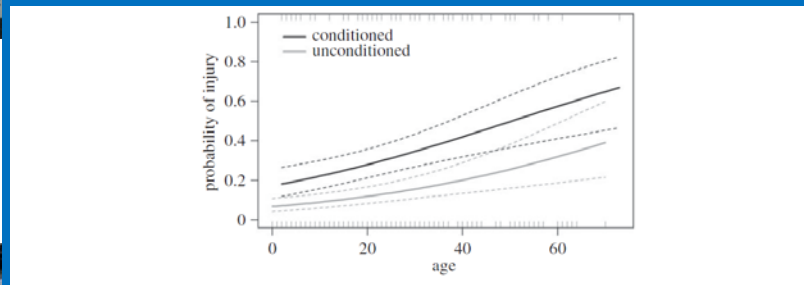
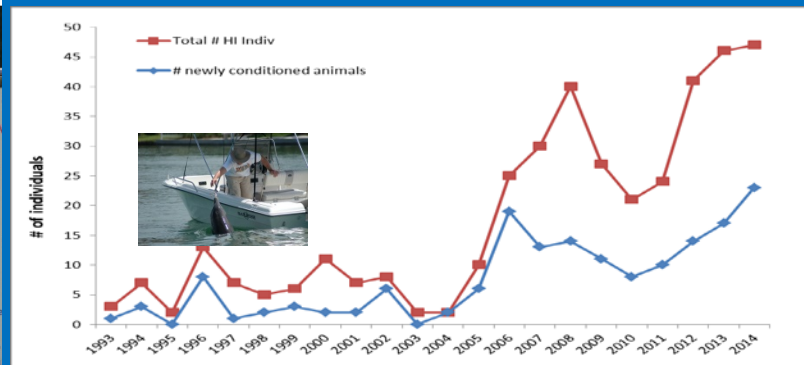


Figure 6. Probability of injury as a function of age for conditioned (black solid line) and unconditioned (grey solid line) bottlenose dolphins. The solid lines represent the fitted values of the generalized linear model. The dashed lines represent 95% CIs. The distribution of age values for conditioned and unconditioned dolphins are shown by the top and bottom rug plots, respectively.  $n = 404$ .

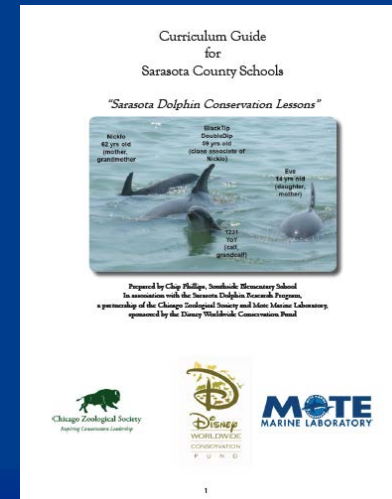




# Our solution: Education and outreach activities...but how do we reach appropriate audiences and get them to care enough to make a difference?

## Audiences/venues/materials:

1. Stakeholder meetings/town halls.
2. Elementary school curriculum.
3. High school field and lab activities.
4. College internship opportunities.
5. Grad student and professional opportunities.
6. Videos, social media presence.
7. Printed materials: books, brochures, cards.
8. Scientific publications.



To report feeding or harassment of wild dolphins, call the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Enforcement Division at: 1-800-853-1964.

To report an injured or entangled dolphin, or other wildlife, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at: 1-888-404-FWCC (3922).

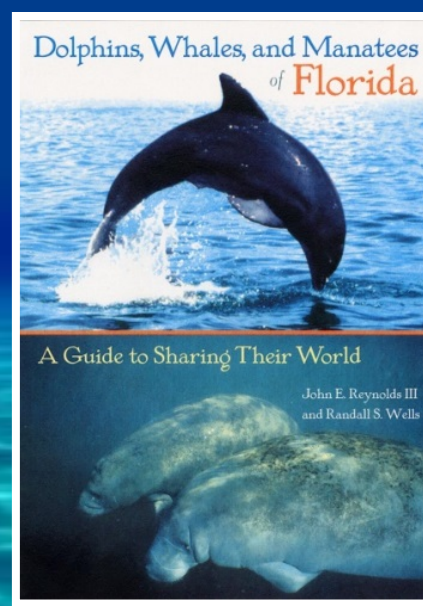
For more information on fishing line recycling and bin locations, please visit: [www.fishinglinerecycling.org](http://www.fishinglinerecycling.org)

For more information on dolphins and interactions with anglers, please visit [www.mote.org](http://www.mote.org) or [www.sarasotadolphin.org](http://www.sarasotadolphin.org)



**Dolphins Need Your Help.** Serious and even fatal dolphin injuries from interactions with recreational fishing gear and boats are on the rise. You can prevent injuries to dolphins and other sea life - and have a better day on the water - by following a few tips designed to protect marine animals. These "Best Practices" were developed by marine scientists and wildlife managers working with boaters, anglers, and fishing guides:

- 1) **Never feed wild dolphins - it's harmful and illegal**
  - Feeding teaches dolphins to beg for food and draws them dangerously close to fishing gear and boat propellers.
  - Feeding is illegal under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act.
- 2) **Reuse or share leftover bait**
  - Freeze leftover bait for later or give it to your fishing neighbor.
  - Dumping leftover bait may attract dolphins to fishing areas to beg or steal bait and catch.
- 3) **Reel in your line if dolphins appear**
  - Reel in and wait for dolphins to pass to avoid losing your bait or catch and prevent potential harm to dolphins.
  - Never cast toward dolphins.
- 4) **Change locations if dolphins show interest in bait or catch**
  - Move away from dolphins to avoid unintentionally hooking one and prevent damage to gear or catch.
- 5) **Release catch quietly away from dolphins when and where it is possible to do so without violating any state or federal fishing regulations**
  - Feeding or attempting to feed a marine mammal in the wild is prohibited.
- 6) **Check gear and terminal tackle**
  - Inspect your gear often to avoid unwanted line breaks - even small amounts of gear in the water can be harmful to wildlife if entangled or ingested.
- 7) **Use circle and corrodible hooks**
  - Circle hooks may reduce injuries to fish, dolphins, and sea turtles.
  - Corrodible hooks (any hook other than stainless steel) eventually dissolve.
- 8) **Stay at least 50 yards away**
  - Stay a safe distance from wild dolphins to avoid causing potential harm.
  - Maintaining a safe distance helps keep dolphins wild.
- 9) **Prevent wildlife entanglements - recycle fishing line**
  - Place all broken or used fishing line in a Mono-filament Fishing Line Recycling Bin.
  - If no recycling bins are available, place broken or used fishing line that has been cut into pieces in a lidded trash can.
- 10) **Stash your trash**
  - Littering is illegal and can be harmful to wildlife.
  - Collect any trash you've left behind and place it in a lidded trash can.





# Our solution: Education and outreach activities...but how do we reach appropriate audiences and get them to care enough to make a difference?

Approach:

1. Gordon Bauer suggested that facts are not enough, and we need to influence behaviors more than attitudes.
2. Heidi Harley suggested using empathy and rapport to influence behavior change - the in-group concept.
3. We have been using a combination of these ideas to promote conservation of Sarasota dolphins, based on long-term research, using the strength of our past efforts to look to the future:
  - Helping people to relate to the dolphins as individuals, as neighbors, with local histories and dramas that we have documented over the course of their lives;
  - When possible, we give voice to issues through our staff and students - who better to interpret and speak passionately about our findings?

Risky unnatural feeding behaviors are spread through dolphin social learning – we try to mitigate through human education.



**And if we need more, we can play the “cuteness card” to get people to care about issues faced by these animals.**

After Megan’s talk on Wednesday, there may be stiff competition for “King of Cute” among Florida’s aquatic mammals...



**VS.**



*You be the judge....*