“Numerically Less” Study Makes the Grade

The Dolphin Research Center family has known for years that our dolphins can grasp numerical concepts. At long last, we’ve shared that amazing knowledge with the scientific community and the world. By the time you read this, our research paper Understanding of the Concept of Numerically “Less” by Bottlenose Dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) will already have been published in the August issue of the American Psychology Association's Journal of Comparative Psychology (Vol. 119, No. 3).

If you’ve been to DRC in the last couple of years, chances are you’ve seen Talon or Rainbow in their research sessions, patiently waiting for the black boards with white dots to appear so that they could choose the board with fewer dots. In their test sessions, the boys were shown all possible pairs of numbers between one and eight – and they chose correctly greater than 80 percent of the time! Although similar studies have been done with primates, this is the first time that dolphins have been successfully proven to understand advanced numerical concepts.

Dolphin Research Center’s Senior Research Scientist Dr. Kelly Jaakkola explains that, “Human infants know that one rock is different than two rocks, but it’s unclear if they know that one rock is “NUMERICALLY LESS” STUDY MAKES THE GRADE

Executive Vice President Mandy Rodriguez gives the “less” signal and Talon considers his choice during a typical trial in DRC’s newly published study.

See “Numerically Less” on Page 2.

“Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”

“Girl power” has taken on a whole new meaning when it comes to the front lagoon at Dolphin Research Center. Theresa, Molly, Tursi, Merina, Aleta, Santini, and Pandora have all joined forces to make sure that their lagoon has the right amount of female flair! Just half these girls living together would keep our trainers on their toes, so you can imagine all the amusing antics at DRC this summer.

Of course summer is the time of year when everyone loves being in the water. That goes for DRC guests and staff alike. Nothing seems more enjoyable for the ladies in the front, or the trainers, than to end a great session with a swim around the front lagoon. However you won’t catch the trainers doing too much swimming on their own with these ladies around! They are always willing to offer a helping fin. Even when the trainers have both hands on a dorsal fin to receive a tow back to the dock, the other ladies not assisting with the tow try to help by pushing on the trainer’s feet as well. Teamwork is just as abundant in the lagoons of DRC as it is on land!

The ladies in the front have also been playing with a lot of new friends this summer and with some old ones too. Summertime at DRC heralds the excitement of our weeklong DolphinLab and Dolphin Camp programs. We welcomed many first time students this year along with quite a few second or third time participants. The ladies actively help teach these youngsters by

“Numerically Less,” from Page 1.

less than two rocks. The ability to distinguish and choose the set with fewer objects probably develops early in children’s second year of life. Scientists call this relative numerosness. For our study, we wanted to see if dolphins also have the capacity to choose ‘numerically less’.

The “less” study greatly expands our knowledge of dolphins’ cognitive ability and may show us how they respond to numerical situations in the open oceans. Additionally, when an animal species demonstrates greater intelligence, it is human nature to be more concerned about and aware of the needs of these animals, which helps worldwide conservation efforts. It also adds to our understanding of evolutionary processes when a species that followed a completely different evolutionary path than our own, shares an ability only previously seen in primates.

In the world of scientific study, it isn’t enough to run tests and determine results. It’s important that the findings are published in a reputable journal or periodical. “It’s a quality check,” Kelly says. “The important thing about scientific publications is that they are peer-reviewed. That means other scientists have looked the paper over and agree that it meets stringent standards with respect to methodology and interpretation."

The Journal of Comparative Psychology is very well respected in the field of animal cognition. “So it seemed like a great place to go,” she adds. The road to actually being published is time consuming. After almost three years of development, training and testing with Talon, Kelly drafted the original version of the paper. Kathy Roberts, Vice-President of Animal Care and Operations, who oversees the Research Department, explains the DRC process. “After Kelly finished the draft, she sent it to some of her scientific peers for their input. Once those suggestions were incorporated, the paper was reviewed by members of DRC’s Research Oversight Committee (ROC).” (In addition to Kelly and Kathy, ROC members include President Jayne Shannon Rodriguez,

Research Coordinator Emily Guarino sets up the boards for a trial. Remember, although Emily knows the right answer, the dolphin can’t see her when deciding on his answer.

Executive Vice President Mandy Rodriguez, Vice President of Animal Care and Training Linda Erb, Medical Director Pat Clough, Education Director Kirsten Donald, Research Coordinator Emily Guarino and Corporate Projects Administrator Deb Huckabee-Wesson.)

With the internal review complete, Kelly originally submitted the research paper to the Journal in late January 2004. As is the standard practice, the journal editor sent the paper out to other scientists for review, and then came back to us with the wonderful news that our paper had been accepted, pending appropriate revisions. “The request for revisions is not unusual,” explains Kelly. “In fact, it’s very unusual for a paper to be accepted ‘as is’ the first time through.” In the meantime, we had finished testing Rainbow, which gave us a second set of results from a completely different dolphin to include in the revised paper. This further emphasized the validity of the results that Talon had already achieved.

On December 11, 2004, the paper was accepted without additional revision requests and we were informed of the August release. With its publication, all...
the hard work that the staff and dolphins conducted here on Grassy Key took on even more of a global significance. “Science is a collaborative endeavor. If all we knew about the world was what was found out in one laboratory, we would know very little indeed,” Kelly elaborates. “Publication is how scientists tell each other what they have done, so that other scientists can build on it, or disagree with it, which also leads to progress.”

In December 2003, Kelly presented the study to other scientists at the Fifteenth Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals in Greensboro, NC. Judging by comments made to Kelly afterward, the presentation was enthusiastically received by the scientists in attendance.

DRC’s findings add to the body of knowledge that we have about dolphin intelligence, which is one more step toward increasing our understanding of these amazing animals. The study also contributes one more piece to the puzzle of mathematical cognition in general. According to Kelly, “The more we understand about what kinds of numerical tasks different animals, including humans, can do, the better we will be able to understand the evolution and development of numerical cognition in both humans and other animals.”

For DRC, the paper’s publication is a momentous achievement, and the realization of a long-term, precious goal. Since our founding in 1984, we have been involved in numerous studies and papers. However, Numerically “Less” is the first project to be conceived by our own senior research scientist, and then conducted and published solely by DRC. Kathy explains that, “We’ve been trying to strengthen and build our research department and get our dolphins involved in more projects. For years we’ve worked so hard to become an outstanding research facility and now we are seeing those efforts come to fruition. Getting this paper published is very exciting.”

Its significance spreads beyond our lagoons in myriad ways. In addition to the scientific importance, Kathy continues, “With our efforts here, and through the presentations we’ve made at conferences such as IMATA (International Marine Animal Training Association), we’ve demonstrated to the marine mammal community that you can run a busy facility with public programs all day long and still do research projects. Yes, it takes determination, ingenuity and good scheduling, but it is possible.”

While there’s no way of knowing if other facilities will follow our lead, Kathy hopes that will happen. “They can have something fun and entertaining for the dolphins to do and for people to watch, and still add to the knowledge base that we’re trying to establish with these wonderful creatures.”

-Mary Stella

---

**Dolphin T-Shirt Raffle**

Visitors at DRC are given an opportunity to participate in a monthly raffle for a Dolphin-Painted T-shirt. The raffle drawing is held once a month, and winners are announced on the first day of the following month. Congratulations to the following DRC visitors!

July 1st winner:  
Robert Bohdan  
Ithaca, NY

August 1st winner:  
Andrew Vaatsch  
Little Torch Key, FL

---

**Adopt-A-Dolphin**

Support your favorite DRC dolphin or sea lion by becoming a Dolfriend, Pod Pal or Parent. Experience the warm feeling that comes with knowing you are helping in a significant way to provide for the care and feeding of your dolphin or sea lion friend. Your tax-deductible membership will help us fulfill our promise to provide the finest home humanly possible for our marine mammal family.

**Dolfriend ($50):**  
Receive all the benefits of a Dolfriend membership plus  
- A full-color photo certificate of your dolphin or sea lion friend  
- A biography about your dolphin or sea lion friend  
- 10% discount on most DRC Gift Shop items  
- Free DRC admission for two for a year

**Pod Pal ($100):**  
Receive all the benefits of a Pod Pal membership plus  
- A subscription to our quarterly Gray Cross newsletter  
- Free DRC admission for four for a year

**Parent ($240):**  
Provide the ultimate in support for your favorite DRC dolphin or sea lion by pledging just $20 a month to sponsor a meal each month for your favorite dolphin or sea lion. You will receive all the benefits of a Pod Pal membership plus free admission for five for a year and silver bucket stickers for your certificate.

Visit us on the World Wide Web:  
www.dolphins.org

Innerspace or cyberspace, the dolphins of Dolphin Research Center look forward to your visit.
When you think of tools, what first comes to your mind? A hammer and nails? A screwdriver? A wrench? When you think about who uses tools, who first comes to your mind? Carpenters? Those may be the most obvious examples, but did you know that your paper and pencils are tools in your classroom? Not for building or hanging a picture of course, but tools for learning.

Everyone uses tools every day! Tools enable us to perform a certain task. We even use tools to eat. The knives and forks or chopsticks, even our fingers, are tools that we use for eating. Tools are everywhere, and guess what? We as human beings aren’t the only animals who use them. Some animals use tools as well.

For example, chimpanzees use sticks as tools to catch termites to eat. They place thin sticks down into termite mounds and lick the termites off the sticks. Pretty amazing! Without the tiny sticks, how would the chimpanzees get the termites? Their arms can’t fit through the openings of the mounds.

Birds use rocks to crack nuts and open shellfish to eat. If a nut or shellfish is too hard to crack open with their beaks, they hold the nut or shell in their beaks and drop them to the ground and CRACK! They’re open!

Dolphins can use sponges to sweep the ocean floor and uncover crabs and shrimp to eat without scratching their beaks, which are also called rostrums. Imagine that you wanted to eat something under the sand and your mouth was the only way to get to it. Have you ever felt sandpaper? To prevent sand from scratching your mouth, a sponge is a good solution!

How do dolphins learn to use a sponge to feed? They learn from their moms, the same way that we do! Just as we are taught to eat certain things, so are dolphins. Based on where we live in the world, we might use forks, knives, chopsticks, or our fingers to eat. Based on where dolphins live in the world, they feed in different ways, too. Many pods, groups of dolphins, participate in prey herding, or baitballing, in which the pod members herd their fish into a tight ball and then take turns diving in to feed — teamwork at its best!

In many areas, bottlenose dolphins have been seen fishwacking, a behavior a dolphin accomplishes by smacking its tail on intended prey to stun it, making it easier to catch. Kerplunking is a similar method seen in areas of Florida. A dolphin will drive its tail hard through the surface of the water, scaring fish out of their hiding places. Simultaneously, the dolphin will also create a bubble net inhibiting the movement of the...
disoriented and fleeing fish. Crater
feeding is another popular method
of foraging that is seen in many
areas of the world.

Scientists think that dolphins
may scan the floor of the ocean
with echolocation to initially locate
possible prey. Echolocation is the
method that toothed whales use to
find their prey. They send out
high-pitched clicks from their
melons, or foreheads, and listen
for the echoes produced when the
clicks are reflected by objects in
their path. Once found, the dol-
phins will then dig on the floor of
the ocean by sticking their faces in
the sand, twisting and digging,
until they reach their prey.

Dolphins in Florida have been
observed mud ring feeding. One
dolphin out of a group will create
a circular cloud of mud around
prey causing it to leap out of the
water over the cloud where the
other members of the pod are
waiting to catch it in mid air. In
South Carolina, dolphins have
developed a unique style of feed-
ing called mudbank strand feed-
ing. The dolphins will drive their
prey out of the water and onto
mud banks, where the dolphins
will slide out and follow, scooping
the stranded fish up.

Dolphins are amazingly adept at using their
mouths, rostrums, flippers and flukes to mani-

Do you eat pancakes? If you
do, do you use a knife and fork, or
just a fork? Do you use your
fingers and eat them one at a time
plain? And how do you eat your
pancakes? You’d be surprised how
many ways people eat pancakes.
Some people cut out triangles.
Some people eat them from the
inside out. Others from the outside
edges in. Some eat them in a stack
of two or three, and others eat
them one at a time. Do you drown
your pancakes in syrup, or put
butter on them? Some people eat
them with jam or jelly, fruit,
whipped cream or even peanut
butter. How do you eat your
pancakes? Let us know. Write to us
at:

Ocean Notions
C/O Education Department
Dolphin Research Center
58901 Overseas Highway
Grassy Key, FL 33050

--Catherine Renaud
Neither rain, nor wind nor gloom of night keeps a television crew from a broadcast. So we found out in June when *Good Morning America* contacted us about a research study on dolphins in Australia that were observed using sponges to protect their rostrums during foraging. The researchers, who believe this indicates tool usage, also watched the dolphins teach the technique to their offspring.

*GMA* decided that interviewing a dolphin expert – DRC’s Vice-President of Animal Care and Training Linda Erb – with live dolphins was a terrific way to inform and entertain viewers. They even asked if a dolphin would wear a sponge on her rostrum to simulate the research study. The day before the shoot, Linda brought a natural sponge to the dock for a session with Santini and Aleta. Allie backed off a good three feet as if to say, “You want me to wear that thing? Forget it!” Instead, she rolled to her side and waved, perhaps suggesting that she’d touch it with her pectoral flipper. Santini hovered closer to the sponge, but wasn’t quite ready to touch it. Finally, Linda demonstrated by wearing the object on her own head. “Oh, that’s more like it,” Tina must have thought and rose out of the water to tap it with her rostrum.

In the dark pre-dawn hours of June 10th, while Tropical Storm Arlene, a hundred or so miles off in the Gulf, dumped torrents of rain, Media Relations Coordinator Mary Stella met the crew at the gate. The producer didn’t look at all confident, but nobody, including *Good Morning America*, wanted to give up if we could successfully pull off the shoot.

When the gloomy sky lightened at daybreak, the rain eased and Linda and trainer Loriel Caprio woke up the dolphins for their spot on national television. The crew adjusted their cameras and lights to capture lively dolphin activity, which was fed via satellite to New York City. The home studio edited the footage to *GMA’s Good to Go* theme song and broadcast it to pre-promote the story.

When the gloomy sky lightened at daybreak, the rain eased and Linda and trainer Loriel Caprio woke up the dolphins for their spot on national television. The crew adjusted their cameras and lights to capture lively dolphin activity, which was fed via satellite to New York City. The home studio edited the footage to *GMA’s Good to Go* theme song and broadcast it to pre-promote the story.

The crew readied Linda for her live interview. The producers wanted her in the water with the dolphins, so we chose the Splash dock in the front lagoon for our ‘set.’ The sound technician hooked a transmitter to the back of Linda’s swimsuit underneath her tank top, and outfitted her with an earpiece so that she could hear the questions.

Not five minutes before going live, rain poured down again, and we hurried to protect Linda and the equipment with a hooded jacket and an umbrella. Miraculously, 45 seconds to air, the rain eased to a few drops and the sky brightened. The countdown began, and on cue, show host Bill Weir introduced the segment.

Seamlessly, Linda interacted with the dolphins while also listening and answering questions about how the dolphins in Australia might use the sponges. The interview then moved to questions about social learning. With lots of enthusiasm, she eloquently explained that, at DRC, we frequently see dolphins teaching behaviors to each other. Pandora assisted by demonstrating the famous ‘giggle’ behavior that’s been passed from dolphin to dolphin. Then Pandora took off for a brilliant series of spiral dives, which she learned to do by observing her mother Merina and Aunt Aleta.

A few minutes later, the segment ended. The cameraman yelled, “We’re clear!” and everyone grinned. The awestruck producer, who was in contact with the home studio via her cell phone, exclaimed, “That was incredible. New York is very happy!” So were we!

**Dolphin Joy for a Special Pair**

That adventure was the first of three significant media events in June. Some of you may have seen a story on the *Today* show about a Wisconsin National Guardsman named Scott Southworth who, while on active duty in Iraq, formed a strong friendship with a 10 year-old, orphaned Iraqi boy with cerebral palsy. Scott and other soldiers regularly visited an orphanage to relieve
the stress of their demanding duties training civilian police in Baghdad. During those visits, Ala’á, who cannot walk on his own, literally dragged himself over to sit with Scott, and the two truly bonded. Doctors were concerned about what would happen to the boy once Scott’s tour of duty ended. Ala’á was scheduled to move to another facility, mostly for disabled adults. By all accounts, that was a dreadful place.

Moved by faith and friendship, Scott wanted to try and adopt this sweet, charming boy. After returning home, he continued his efforts and, finally, was able to bring Ala’á to this country on a humanitarian parole. A Marathon radio personality saw Scott and Ala’s story on television and was moved to create a Florida Keys vacation for them. She contacted DRC and we eagerly agreed to welcome them for a DolphinSplash. Other businesses in Marathon contributed lodging, meals and additional fun times for the pair, as well as for Scott’s lady friend Meg and her son Tyler.

The heart-warming story captured the interest of the media and several news stations and newspapers visited DRC to cover the event. While reporters and visitors looked on, beaming, Scott, Ala’á and their friends had a wonderful time playing with Kibby and Linda Erb, VP of Animal Care and Training. Dolphin Child Director Joan Mehew assisted Ala’á in the water so that he could enjoy the fun to its fullest!

Afterward, the reporters interviewed Scott, who is fighting to make this a permanent adoption. Listening to him explain that Ala’á chose him, and watching the two of them interact, it’s clear that these two special people are meant to be together as father and son. We felt privileged to meet them and loved watching their obvious enjoyment in their Splash with Kibby. That evening, the story aired on local affiliates for CBS, NBC, ABC and FOX. FOX National news and a number of stations in different parts of the country picked up the footage, too. Captioned photos appeared in newspapers nationwide.

**Ready for Their Close-up**

Only two days after that media event, we rolled into “Camera, Action!” mode. A German production company had contracted with DRC to do a one-day location shoot for a television movie. Field producers, a director and assistant director, a full technical crew, wardrobe mistress, two actors and various other personnel converged on the center.

In the morning, Santini, Merina and Aleta alternated in the role of a dolphin named Rusty and interacted with the actors in the water. The most difficult part, with our three ‘star quality’ sisters, was getting them to take turns. There was just so much excitement, with the extra people and equipment, who could blame them? Even Miss Theresa swam over from another dock to check out the action.

In the afternoon, we relocated to the right back lagoon for high-energy dolphin athleticism. For a few weeks leading up to the shoot, Linda had worked with our bachelor dolphins on ‘fences down’ acclimation training. The results were definitely worth the effort. When the perimeter fence was lowered, we obtained an absolutely gorgeous open horizon shot.

Kibby took over most of the spotlight with high dives, circle flips and other aerial behaviors. His buddy Sandy also contributed some powerful tail lobs with splashing results! The movie crew cheered each spectacular behavior and their smiles could not have been any broader when they finally proclaimed, “It’s a wrap!” Kibby and Sandy rejoined their pool mates, Environmental Services reattached the fence and DRC closed the book on another successful media day.

Each of these three projects touched on different aspects of the Dolphin Research Center mission – from the scientific, to the special needs assistance, to the entertainment fascination that began over 40 years ago with Flipper. All of this attention came our way because of our outstanding reputation, which has developed over the years with your help. Thanks to the ongoing support of our members, our mission and message continue to reach people around the world!

–Mary Stella
Theresa, Tursi, Molly, Merina, Aleta, Santini: “Here comes the bride.” Apparently someone informed our beautiful ladies up front of the recent wedding of two of our employees. As the guests were entering the causeway prior to the memorable evening, the six ladies of our maternity pod were seen popping their heads high out of the water and looking around to check out the activities. They even joined in on the congratulations with vocals of their own as the two newlyweds stood under the research tower for pictures.

Molly: Following an Adult DolphinLab this summer, one of the participants, as a gift for Molly, brought in two brand new scarves to give to her. Molly immediately began playing with them as if not able to choose which one to wear first. Then, the scarves disappeared, as usual, hidden in Molly’s underwater closet, not to be seen for a few weeks until Molly brought both scarves up together and handed them to her trainer.

Merina: This summer, more than just our dolphins have wowed us with shark impressions. During a Dolphin Encounter program with staff member Mary Stella and her nephew, Asa, Merina amazingly picked up on an unusual imitate from Asa. Instead of the more obvious imitates like splashing, spinning or dancing, Asa decided to try and do a shark impression. He swam on his belly moving his legs from side to side. Without hesitation, Merina picked it up right away and did her very scary shark impression around the lagoon.

Tursi: During a recent session at the front lagoon, Tursi became the facility’s unofficial shark spotter. Linda was in the water near the dock playing with Tursi, which we all know is a Tursi favorite. Suddenly, Tursi took off just as something rubbed past Linda’s leg. Tursi informed Linda that something was fishy by not returning to the dock for the remainder of the session. The Animal Care and Habitat department quickly went into “shark catching mode” and it did not take long for Brandon to catch the small nurse shark and return it to the water on the ocean side so that it would not come back to DRC. Even though the nurse shark is not harmful, maybe next time you can do your cute shark impression to let everyone know you saw one.

Pandora: Pandora has been keeping her trainers busy with new toys and in true Pandora style, new ways of playing with old toys. It is well-known fact that Pandora has a love for hula hoops that is more like an infatuation. We have noticed that once she begins playing with one, two or even a number of hoops together, that she doesn’t want to give them back. Marie, our toy making queen, made an alternative to her typical round hoops by creating a square one! Pandora really seems to enjoy the novelty of her new toy and even shares it with her trainers by handing it back as if to say “check this out, isn’t it neat?”

More recently, Pandora found a new love for her medical sessions too. While Denise was working with Pandora on the fecal tube, the tube was grabbed by a snapper, pulled from Denise’s hands and taken under the water. Pandora quickly went under and popped back up to return the tube to Denise.

Sandy: It seems as though Sandy has become quite the wide receiver lately. For anyone who has gotten the privilege to see him show off his amazing ball balancing skills, it is a memory never to be forgotten. However, Sandy has more recently switched his game from basketball to football. Instead of catching the ball in his mouth or balancing it on his rostrum, Sandy “goes long” by doing a backward tailwalk and catching the ball between his pectoral flippers.

Pax: Pax has been learning a lot from his buddy Sandy, including his love for the basketball. It appears that Pax enjoys it so much, he can’t give it up. While playing a game of catch with his trainer, Pax successfully caught the ball in his mouth, but that is only where the fun began. While attempting to throw it back, all that moved was Pax’s head, and not the ball. He instead kept the ball tightly held between his jaws and found a new way to play with it that didn’t involve giving it back.

Delphi, Kibby and Rainbow: These three are really enjoying the end of summer days of relaxation. It is a well known fact at DRC that Kibby and Delphi love to sit at our beachside lagoon and chat with guests, awarding them the appropriate nickname of “The Beach Boys.” Like boys playing in the schoolyard, they have brought Rainbow in on the fun and he quickly followed in their “fluke prints.” Now you can almost
always walk on the causeway and have two lagoons where you will be appropriately greeted and serenaded.

Talon and AJ: The summer months were busy learning months for these two boys and AJ has apparently been busy watching the girls up front. Even though AJ is two lagoons away, he has been showing off a cute new behavior that until now was only done by Theresa. When excited for himself, AJ begins whistling, and then spins his body around in circles.

Talon has learned a new medical behavior that we call ‘blowhole open.’ For this behavior, Talon is asked to open the blowhole, then instead of closing it after a breath, he keeps it open for several seconds. This amazing behavior allows us to get a closer look at the inside of the blowhole area and, if needed, to take a sterile sample for knowledge on his respiratory system.

Calusa and Tanner: Our two littlest ones continue to keep busy with all the new behaviors that they are learning. Their brains are like big sponges just waiting to soak up new information. Dolphins’ natural love for imitating one another has definitely played a big part in their learning as well. Older cousin Calusa has been helping out with teaching Tanner a new behavior called “peek.” When given the signal, the two will disappear under the water, and emerge with their heads up right in front of the guests. Calusa learned this behavior quickly on her own, then one day, when she was asked for the behavior, Tanner went with her, much to the trainer’s surprise. He had learned the behavior all on his own by watching Calusa and imitating what she was doing.

Kilo and Loki: Fall cleaning came early this year for our fuzzy and furry-faced boys. The sea lion habitat received some rearranging of furniture last month. The small dock that was used by Kilo to come up on to the boardwalk has been taken out and replaced by a new one by the beach area of the habitat in the shallow water. Since little Kilo is not so little anymore, he last weighed in at 184 lbs., his “booster seat” was no longer necessary. Kilo is showing us his ‘big boy’ abilities by jumping right onto the boardwalk from the water just like Loki does. Now both boys have a second dock to lay out on. This dock also gives us all new training opportunities.

–Ashley Kremer
Hurricane Katrina Blows by the Keys

The good news is that Dolphin Research Center sustained limited structural damage due to Hurricane Katrina. We were closed for one day when the wind blew up to 85 miles an hour and made it too dangerous for guests or staff to be outside. Our Hurricane Team, lead by Mandy Rodriguez, Executive Vice President, made it to work and fed the dolphins in between gusts of wind and driving rain storms. Unfortunately, Bea, the pink Moluccan cockatoo, who called DRC home for approximately 20 years did not survive the storm (see story below).

During a major hurricane, the safest option for our dolphin family may be the open ocean. They can seek shelter in deeper water away from the shoreline where debris and violent waves can be extremely dangerous. However, our dolphins are not familiar with the world outside their lagoons. They could easily become disoriented and lost. We have to find a way to ensure that the dolphins are safe during the storm, and that we can find them quickly and bring them home after the storm has passed.

We are currently in the research and development phase of a new Dolphin Tracking system. The innovative design uses suction cups with a transmitter that can be located using a mobile receiver. The next step in the development process involves training the dolphins to wear the transmitter and ensuring the device doesn’t harm their skin. We still have a great deal of research, including training, testing, and careful observation before this approach can be used during a hurricane, but this new device is very promising. If you’d like to make a donation towards this research project, please do so via our website at www.dolphins.org, or call the Membership & Development Office at (305) 289-1121 X229.

A Sad Goodbye to an Old Friend

All of us have quiet friends who seem to be a constant in our lives that have always been around. Bea, the pink Moluccan cockatoo, was that kind of member of the Dolphin Research family. Now that she is gone a small piece of the fabric of DRC’s everyday life will be missing. Bea lived at DRC for approximately 20 years. Like all of the birds at DRC, she first came to us because she could not continue to live at home. Bea was very shy and she did not get along with other birds. She also plucked her own feathers, which is a sign of neurosis in birds. Over the years the DRC staff and veterinarians have tried various medications and supplements to make our “Bea-bopper” calmer but had very little success. It seems that the stress of yet another storm was too much for our lovely Bea. Goodbye, dear friend.

We will always remember beautiful Bea.

CALL NOW, PLAY LATER!

Members . . .

Don’t forget that you can now make reservations for Trainer for a Day, Dolphin Encounter, and DolphinSplash up to 12 months in advance! To reserve your spot in one of these exciting interactive programs, call our reservation line at 305-289-0002 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days a week.

Due to the level of service we give to each customer, our reservation line is often extremely busy. We appreciate your patience.
RAINFOW – DOLPHIN OF THE MONTH

I’m sure most of you know how close everyone is here at Dolphin Research Center. We value anyone who gets involved to make DRC the facility it is today! Yet do you really know how close the animals are to each other? We’ve got tons of family members including moms, dads, brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles, granddads, and grandmoms. Dolphin Research Center is proud of the family relationships we see every day. Hopefully, the dolphins that are born here can help us spread the word on marine mammal conservation and have a lot of fun doing it! Rainbow is one of several proud fathers at DRC. While he was not born here like some of our other residents, he has much to share with everyone.

This cute is one of our more dominant males and loves to visit with the ladies. In fact, he visited so much that he became the father of Pax (with Tursi) and Calusa (with Merina). If you have gotten to know either of these two kids, you know Bo produces wonderful babies! A couple of months ago, Rainbow moved to the right side of the causeway where he lives with Delphi, Sandy, Kibby, and his son, Pax! The staff has had the privilege to watch father and son interact every day and what fun it has been!

Even though we’re not sure Pax or Rainbow realize that they are related, they do seem to enjoy spending time with each other. Pax definitely likes to follow Rainbow around. Occasionally the trainers will split up the five boys for different sessions, and Pax, when he’s not being a typical eight-year old and playing games with his trainers, chooses to accompany Bo in a separate lagoon. Seeing these boys do some high-flying aerials together really puts a smile on your face!

Not only has Rainbow enjoyed spending time with his male friends, but he’s also very eagerly learning new behaviors. Bo is one of our loudest and most boisterous dolphins. After each behavior, you can often hear him scream for joy clear across the facility. Rainbow never ceases to make his trainers laugh because he picked up on a new behavior!

Bo has become very good at a certain new pose for the DolphinSplash program. He is already an old flipper at having fun with the guests when they come down into a waist-deep tray to play. For his new behavior, he was trained to swim halfway into the tray and pose while the guests wrap their arms around him. It makes a very cute picture and it appears that he enjoys doing something different right in the tray! The guests certainly love holding over 500 pounds of pure love in their arms!

A couple of other behaviors he has been learning actually include his son Pax. Since they make such a good combination during sessions, we have been training behaviors to them together. One is the opposite tail walk. These two look spectacular as Pax flies

That smile, that charm – Rainbow is simply irresistible.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

YES! I WANT TO BECOME A DOLPHIN PARENT!
I want to adopt ____________(DRC’s dolphin name) or ☐ Please choose a dolphin for me.
☐ Enclosed is my full payment of $240 or
☐ I want to make 4 quarterly payments of $60* each or
☐ I want to make 12 monthly payments of $20* each.
  *For periodic payment: ☐ This is my authorization to charge my credit card each period (fill out card information to the right) or ☐ please send me reminders.

YES! I WANT TO JOIN THE DOLPHIN SOCIETY! (Foreign members must choose at least the FAMILY level of membership). Enclosed are my dues for:
☐ $25 Student (I have enclosed proof of enrollment with my payment.)
☐ $40 Individual ☐ $75 Family ☐ $85 Gray Cross ☐ $150 Sponsor

YES! I WANT TO BE A DOLFRIEND!
☐ Enclosed is my $50 contribution for (DRC Dolphin’s Name): ________________________
☐ This is a gift for (Name):__________________________
☐ (Mailing Address):______________________________

Please return this form with payment to: Dolphin Research Center, 58901 Overseas Highway, Grassy Key, FL 33050. All donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. PLEASE ALLOW 2-4 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY.

See Rainbow, Page 12.
Rainbow, from Page 11.

forward on his tail and Rainbow goes backward right beside him. Pax already knew the behavior when it was taught to the two of them, but Bo did not. Sometimes it takes a little while for them to catch on to a behavior like this because they love to imitate their friends. Yet Rainbow picked that opposite tail walk up by the end of the session, and looked great doing it!

Another behavior involves Rainbow jumping over Pax. Pax has the easy part; he just has to lie on his back!

Rainbow, however, hasn’t quite figured out that he has to jump over Pax when he is lounging, and not anywhere he pleases. Typically he jumps closer to the dock where he was originally trained to dive, leaving Pax lying on his tummy somewhere in the middle of the lagoon. Don’t worry Pax! I’m sure Bo will put the pieces of the puzzle together and get you involved with the behavior! It certainly will look spectacular when it’s done.

Rainbow has so many facets to his personality that they are difficult to include in just one story! Not only is he a handsome father who is irresistible to the ladies (Yes, that includes the female trainers), but he is also fun loving, a little clumsy, and very smart. A session with Rainbow will always put a smile on your face, whether he’s charming the other guests, his trainers, or charming you!

We’re glad to know our Bodacious Bo’s personality traits will continue through the generations of his offspring.

–Julie Lockard

Girls,” from Page 1.

participating in swim and Splash sessions as well as teaching the students how to properly give signals during dock sessions. This is always a highlight for the students and a favorite activity for the ladies in the front lagoon.

Nobody makes better teachers than the dolphins themselves. Tursi and Theresa, in particular, always make sure the signal is given properly before leaving the dock to amaze us with one of their behaviors. If not, they wait patiently until the student perfects the signal. Maybe their theory is that practice makes perfect.

Summertime or not, the girls in the front lagoon are always happy to spend time with our guests lagoon side. Between sessions the ladies enjoy watching our guests who lounge on the benches. They occasionally offer a friendly flipper wave hello or a short chat.

They also extend their social time to the boys through their underwater window, underneath the bridge on the causeway, which leads to the boys’ lagoon next door. They have often been seen in one big group staring fixedly at the bachelor pod, apparently quite fascinated with what the guys have to say. Sometimes we hear them offer whistles and clicks of their own wisdom to their handsome counterparts.

Tursi, Theresa, Molly, Merina, Santini, Aleta, and Pandora certainly have had a busy summer, but they spent it doing what they love — putting smiles on faces and making dreams come true. Even as the waters at DRC begin to cool down and we watch the seasons change, rest assured that these ladies will continue to amaze us and anybody else who can spend a little time with them here at Dolphin Research Center.

–Megan Mertsock