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Cetacean awareness day shines a light on whales and dolphins

THE Kelp forest of the inshore waters around the Falklands hosts a unique community of Commerson's and Peale's dolphins while the nearby offshore waters serve as feeding grounds for seasonally migrating Sei whales.

This week, Falklands children were able to learn about the commonly sighted but little understood species courtesy of the Dolphins of the Kelp team (SAERI) and the Sei whale project led by Falklands Conservation (FC).

The teams have gathered baseline information to estimate the population size, distribution, habitat use and genetic association to other populations worldwide. This information is key to understanding and reliably predicting how human activities might impact these species, so effective management strategies for their conservation can be established.

On Sunday SAERI and FC combined their efforts to raise the community's awareness and knowledge of these amazing marine mammals. The event was led by Marina Costa and Maria Isabel Garcia.

Garcia (project manager and officer of the Dolphins of the Kelp Project) along with support from team members Megan Tierney, Ness Smith, Clare Neves-Scott, Liz Milston and Tara Pelembe.

The special event for children between four and 14 years old took place at the Parish Hall and the teams were bombarded by little enthusiasts curious to know what was in store for them, explained Miss Garcia.

The family event consisted of a journey through four different activity-stations and a pop quiz, where children worked on their skills while having fun.

The activities included crafting in origami, creative thinking in biscuit decorations, spatial reasoning building marine animals shapes (tangram), and pattern recognition by finding the matching dolphin dorsal fins. The pop quiz focused on giving children some information on the main characteristics that make whales and dolphins special and well adapted to their challenging marine environment. Children were given a

passport and every time they successfully completed an activity they received a stamp.

The fourth station on pattern recognition gave children the opportunity to have a hands-on experience on the photo-identification work over thousands of photographs during their fieldwork.

Miss Garcia said: "Photo identification is a method in which individual animals, for example dolphins, are identified based on the pattern of naturally acquired marks, scars, and notches on the dorsal fin, as well as the distinctive fin profiles and/or scars found over the body. Marked animals are catalogued for future reference and used for analysis. The ability to identify an individual provides a means to understand the life history of that individual based on long term observations, including how long they remain in an area, how far they travel and which areas are their favourite and most important homes."

She said the histories were useful in estimating demographic processes of survival and recruitment and monitoring changes in abundance.

Catalogues of Commerson's and Peale's dolphins are available

on the SAERI website (<http://www.south-atlantic-research.org/research/doke/1900dolphin-catalogue>). We encourage you all to download them and get to know your dolphins.

The Dolphins of the Kelp team would like to thank all families that attended this special afternoon, "our volunteers for their valuable

time and efforts, and our little artists at the Infant and Junior School who prepared some beautiful pictures of whales and dolphins," said Miss Garcia.

Dolphins of the Kelp is funded by The Darwin Initiative and the FC set whale project is funded by the BEST scheme. All info M Garcia



Above: Maria Garcia models bespoke headwear for young dolphin enthusiasts. Below: Who would have thought a Cetacean day would involve biscuit decorating. Pictures Kaci Goodwin

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Falklands Olympian memorabilia homecoming

FALKLANDS sportsmen and women can look to a locally born Olympian for inspiration – a gold medal winner at that! And soon they will be able to see his Olympic memorabilia where it belongs: in the Falklands Museum.

The architect from Islander Louis Bailion's highly successful participation in the 908 London Olympic Games has been bought for the Falklands by the Friends of the Falkland Islands Museum and Jane Cameron Architects (FIFA Friends).

Among the collection are Louis Bailion's team badge, an album of newspaper cuttings and sporting records, his Olympic Games competitor's identification card and the cap that he would have worn during ceremonies in the specially built White City stadium.

Bailion was the son of a landowner and sheep farmer on West Falkland, and was born at Fox Bay West in 1881, the second of five children born on the Islands.

He left the Islands to be educated in Brian as a young man, and there developed his skills as a hockey player.

He represented England – and, one might say, the Falklands – as a member of the England field hockey team at the 1908 Games, and he contributed significantly to a gold medal for this team. They prevailed over, among other national teams, those of Germany and France.

He was married in 1910 and the marriage produced one daughter and four sons, two of whom were killed in the Battle of Britain.

Bailion enjoyed a successful business career, becoming a director of Phipps Brewery.

When the Friends approached the Museum Director Andrea Barlow asking if the Museum would like the collection, Andrea's reply was succinct and immediate: "Yes please to everything," she said. "We would be incredibly proud to own this amazing collection." The historical items are still in the UK but will be formally presented to the museum soon.

Hockey was a sport new to the Games in 1908, so the Falkland Islander was also a pioneering Olympian. The sport has been played at the Olympics ever since.

At least one other sport enjoyed at the purpose-built White City Olympic stadium has, however, not stood the test of time. Back in 1908, duelling pistol shooters competed, using real pistols but wax bullets and heavy armour. Even considering Falkland Islanders' renowned skills in shooting, this might have been an event best avoided.

Graham Bound