



Peale's dolphin and Dusky's dolphin

A rather surprising intruder

THE Dolphins of the Kelp project had an unexpected treat in July when a surprising (but welcome) intruder crossed their watery path

On July 26 the scientific team were out at sea for their winter season survey off Black Point, Kidney Cove on East Falklands.

Along with their usual research activities, they were testing a new trick to track the dolphins while shooting underwater videos.

Team member Marcello Caz-zolla said: "Back at the office, we checked the new device's recorded footage of what we had believed had been a group of Peale's dolphins and one Dusky's dolphin clearly appeared in the underwater video."

The surprise was that normally only Commerson's and Peale's dolphins are the species regularly present in the nearshore waters year-round.

Dusky's are generally found over the continental shelf and slope rather than in nearshore waters where the Peale's more often is (or is associated with), nonetheless Peale's and Dusky's have been observed together as they mostly share their geographic ranges.

The two species are difficult to differentiate from the surface because they have similar coloration pattern and size.

From underwater footage however, the difference is evident, in particular the Peale's head and face is mainly dark while the Dusky's is whiter with the tip of the rostrum black and a dark line connecting the eye to the pectoral fin.

Marcello explained: "From the video underwater we could also

observe the presence of a distinctive notch on the dorsal fin. This discovery allows easy identification from the surface. With this additional information we were able to check our previous encounters with Peale's dolphins and we discovered that this individual has been observed before. The first time was in June 2017 and then again until July 2018."

They also had the opportunity to collect a small sample of skin from the Dusky's dolphin.

Marcello said: "The analyses of the genetic material will give us further insights on this individual. Why would a Dusky's dolphin be within a population of Peale's? We are open to potential hypotheses: occasional visits in more protected bays, a loner individual adopted by a different species, a hybrid individual born to two different species? The results of the project on genetics, site fidelity and social structure of the population could shed some light on this amazing sighting."

The Project

The Dolphins of the Kelp is a Darwin+ funded project led by the South Atlantic Environmental Institute (SAERI) targeting two species of dolphins inhabiting the coastal waters of the Falkland Islands: Commerson's (*Cephalorhynchus commersonii*) and Peale's (*Lagenorhynchus australis*) dolphins.

The project has been undertaking pioneering research to establish baseline data on species abundance, distribution, natural history, and genetic diversity. Commerson's and Peale's are the only dolphin species regularly

present in the nearshore waters year-round so the presence of the Dusky's came as quite a surprise.

Dolphin classifications

The Peale's dolphin holds a peculiar taxonomic status (classification) as its genus *Lagenorhynchus* is likely an artificial genus and most species included are probably not so closely-related to any of the others.

It is likely that future taxonomic works relying on genetic studies will provide a revision of the genus *Lagenorhynchus*. The genus currently includes at present six species worldwide.

Other than the Peale's dolphin there are: the Atlantic White-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) inhabits cold temperate to subpolar waters of the North Atlantic; the White-beaked dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) that is the most northerly member of the genus and populates cold temperate to subpolar waters of the North Atlantic; the Hourglass dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus cruciger*) that is distributed in the higher latitudes of the southern oceans; the Pacific White-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus obliquidens*) that is found in temperate waters of the North Pacific; and the Dusky's dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*) that is widespread throughout the southern hemisphere.

Thank you

The team express their thanks to Darwin+ and FIG for the funding and their partners Shallow Marine Survey Group (MSG), Falkland Conservation (FC), Grant Munro and Austral Biodiversity Ltd, Oregon State University, and University of St Andrews.



Member of the Legislative Assembly Stacy Bragger shares a glimpse into his working week

A PUBLIC meeting was held last week to outline the upcoming childcare legislation and national minimum standards. There was a good attendance at the meeting and hopefully it highlighted the huge amount of work that both the nurseries and the Education Department are doing in advance of the legislation hopefully being approved in the next couple of months. There will be a further public workshop in early October where relevant issues related to the project will be discussed and explored.

MLAs met last week with the Chamber of Commerce Board which was then followed by an open session with Chamber members. One issue discussed was the Community Development Scheme and possible ways it could be developed. A substantial amount of money is allocated to the CDS annually and it is always underspent. A consultation period on the CDS will take place in the coming weeks which should result in an improved scheme being relaunched in the near future.

The Falkland Islands has been well-represented at the Expo Prado show in Uruguay. By all accounts our presence there has been very successful in promoting the Falklands. The rather feeble protest at the stand also allowed the Penguin News team to write an article with an astounding number of synonyms.

I have begun working on a programme for a Falklands Parliament Week in November. The aim is to have a series of events to promote engagement with local politics and we will look to hold a number of different forums to do that. I hope to be able to circulate a programme for the week next month and hopefully we can get a wide range of people to take part.

Mark Pollard and I set off this week for the party conferences. I am really looking forward to what should be a busy and productive three-week trip. It is obviously a very interesting time in UK politics and it will be fascinating to see what the atmosphere is like at the two conferences. We'll be working hard to promote the Falklands and to raise awareness of our Brexit issues.

Stunning whale stamps from South Georgia

A STUNNING set of stamps entitled South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands Migratory Species has been designed by Andrew Robinson and published by Pobjoy Mint. The Blue Whale *Balaenoptera musculus* and Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae* are beautifully displayed in the set of four stamps. South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands Migratory Species is one of a complimentary suite of stamps being issued in 2018 by British Overseas Territories including Ascension Island, British Antarctic Territory, the Falkland Islands and Tristan da Cunha.

