



PRESS RELEASE

World Animal Day - Portugal celebrates the Year of the Dolphin

Peniche/Portugal, 4 October – The Municipality of Peniche, official supporter of this global campaign, is bringing together conservation bodies to promote dolphin conservation in Portugal. A scientific audience has been invited to attend workshops on dolphins to learn about current cetacean studies, whale watching and the reintroduction of marine mammals in Portugal. The Municipality of Peniche has been working on rescuing stranded cetaceans. Where they have been unsuccessful in saving the dolphins, they have undertaken post mortems.

The Year of the Dolphin has raised widespread attention in Portugal. Research and conservation bodies, municipalities and universities are marking the Year of the Dolphin on Children's Day, Nature Conservation Day, World Animal Day and the International Year of Planet Earth. The Portuguese Association for the Conservation of Cetaceans CETUS has supported the educational campaign by providing a Portuguese translation of the Dolphin Manual to facilitate its distribution nationally and throughout Portuguese speaking countries in Africa. The Dolphin Manual is currently being distributed by UNESCO in Portugal.

"This year's World Animal Day in Portugal is helping to educate people about the need to protect life on the blue planet and conserve fragile marine habitats. The Year of the Dolphin campaign has achieved unprecedented enthusiastic response in this country. We highly appreciate the commitment of the numerous campaign supporters who have successfully catalyzed long-term activities to benefit these marine mammals", said Executive Secretary Robert Hepworth of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

Escola de Mar has organised workshops on marine mammals and it carried out dolphin observation surveys. Ongoing educational activities on marine mammals' biology and history supported by various municipalities as well as scuba diving projects have raised major interest in dolphins. Later this month, courses and lectures on the conservation of dolphins in Portugal will be held to raise awareness. The Year of the Dolphin has prompted educational programs that will be carried out in cooperation with schools and city halls across the country.

The National Association of Nature Conservation "Quercus" works for the conservation of populations of bottlenose dolphins in the Sado River estuary and has intervened with the responsible authorities to develop and implement an action plan. As a part of an awareness raising campaign, Quercus and the organization "Projecto Delfim" briefed journalists on these endangered dolphin populations, leading to significant press coverage.

The University of Minho contributed to the International Year of Dolphin 2007 by highlighting it in an exhibition. At the same time it has presented results of the scientific research of the Marine Mammals Unit of the Portuguese Wildlife Society (SPVS). The Marine Mammals Unit is a joint research effort between SPVS and the Dep. of Biology of the University.

Two open water swimmers based in Peniche, Miguel Arrobas and Nuno Vicente, have completed several swims this summer with the support of the Portuguese Institute for Nature Conservation. They will cross the English Channel in 2008 in order to raise awareness for the fact that water is precious and that seas, rivers and the animals living in them, including dolphin species, need to be protected.

Other ambassadors for nature also continue to highlight the importance of conserving these ocean migrants: "Sailors for Dolphins" who compete in the trans-Atlantic sailing race Transat 6.50 continue to sport the Year of the Dolphin - Logo. After the start on the French Atlantic coast in La Rochelle 16 September, the second leg for Sailors for Dolphins will now start 5 October from Madeira. And the Tourism office of Portugal is an official head partner of the regatta.

The Convention on Migratory Species has joined forces with its two Agreements on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS) and in the Mediterranean and Black Seas (ACCOBAMS), NGOs in particular WDCCS, the travel group TUI and individuals worldwide to conserve dolphins and their habitats. Raising awareness on dangers to dolphins and negotiating regional agreements are crucial step to protect endangered dolphin populations.

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