



Dolphin dares to be different!



Did you know that no two dolphins look exactly the same? Just like humans they all have different features, the most obvious one being their dorsal fin. Every time our researchers visit the Gippsland Lakes, they discover more about the unique dolphins that live and visit there.

The researchers take photos of the fins, using the nicks, notches and scars to identify the dolphins. Some dolphins are well known to our researchers and they don't even need to check the photo files to know who is who!

One such "old friend" is Mody, who has a very distinctive bump in front of the dorsal fin. This unusual deformity may have proved to be a problem for the animal as it could have made it difficult to swim or attract a mate.

It was always assumed Mody was a male as "he" was always seen with a small group of dolphins that didn't have calves.

Imagine the researchers' delight when in June they discovered that Mody had become a mother! They saw her swimming with a dolphin calf by her side, proving that not only was she surviving, but thriving.

It just goes to show that dolphins, like humans, can overcome obstacles that nature puts in the way!

Victoria's own Marine National Parks

We are incredibly fortunate in Victoria to have 13 Marine National Parks and 11 Marine Sanctuaries. We are unique in the world in having such a system to protect our diverse range of marine habitats. In this edition we are looking at the wonders of Marengo Marine National Park and Rickett's Point Marine Sanctuary.



An unforgettable morning swim!

In early August, on a calm West Coast morning, a small group of local Apollo Bay ladies set off for their usual morning swim. They waded in and headed slowly out, some on boards, some swimming.



Humpback breaching

Only metres from the beach a swimmer heard her companions "squealing with delight". "There were 6 or 8 dolphins really close to us, some even swam between us" she said.

On August 28 a similar story was recounted by an Apollo Bay local who spotted a whale and calf off the Great Ocean Rd.

"There was a surfer out there, when the the mother whale

started doing massive jumps out of the water, only meters away"

These massive jumps or breaches, are spectacular to watch but imagine sitting on your surfboard when something

the size of a bus flies out of the water only metres from you and crashes into the water!"

Just a short drive from Apollo Bay you can find a little known ocean haven, the 12 hectare **Marine Sanctuary** at Marengo. It's made up of two offshore reefs that can be clearly seen at low tide. These reefs, about 80 metres from shore, are covered in bull kelp and other seaweeds and are packed with sea life.

Rare treasure on our shores

The unusual and mysterious Paper Nautilus is known for its exquisite paper thin shell. Different to the true Nautilus that lives in the deeper ocean, this creature is actually the Argonaut Octopus which has developed this special shell as a floating vessel to protect its eggs. Finding one of these shells on the beach is like finding a precious



treasure - you would be incredibly fortunate.

In winter months they float closer to our shores. Recently there have been some discovered on the eastern shores of Port Phillip, on the beach at Seaford and at Rickett's Point Marine Sanctuary in Beaumaris.

So keep a keen lookout next time you take a walk along a wintry beach!

'i sea, i care' expands across state!



We are very excited about the expansion of our Ambassador Program to the Western Region of Victoria. We are now engaging with schools the length and breadth of the state! Thanks to the sponsorship of Coast Action/ Coast Care, we will bring our unique brand of Marine Education to schools in the West from Term 4 2008 and into 2009.

Welcome aboard to the following schools:

Deans Marsh, Forrest, Torquay, Bellbrae, Swan Marsh, Apollo Bay P-12, Angelsea, Aireys Inlet, Lorne, Birregurra, Hawkesdale P-12, St Patrick's Port Fairy, Port Fairy Cons, Simpson, Woolsthorpe, Macarthur, and Merrivale.



We look forward to working with you to increase community awareness and knowledge about our amazing marine treasures.

Tyabb PS supports the Dolphins

A huge thank you to Tyabb Primary School on the Mornington Peninsula, for having a "Free Dress Day" to raise money for the Dolphin Research Institute.

Ambassadors Darcy, Emma, Elysha and Lachlan spoke at Assembly about the Gippsland Lakes dolphins. They then collected gold coins from all the students who participated and laid them around the painted outline of a dolphin on the ground

Altogether the school raised \$357.90 for the dolphins. Ben, our Education Officer, presented the school with a certificate at Assembly to recognise this fantastic effort.

Thanks Tyabb PS on behalf of our marine friends!



Tyabb students with their "school dolphin"

Rickett's Point Marine Sanctuary.

Many people have no idea of the amazing life that teems underwater so close to where we live - even in the city.

With a diversity of habitats, from sandy beaches and sandstone tidal reefs to offshore rock bommies carpeted in seaweed, Rickett's Point in Beaumaris provides homes for a myriad of sea creatures.

A huge array of sea snails can be found grazing on the rocky reefs, such as blue periwinkles and limpets. These animals have a tongue like a chainsaw, that literally scrapes off the seaweed that they like to eat!



Other creatures found in the area include octopus, cuttles and abalone. The famous blue ringed octopus hides in rocky crevices and old shells and is able to change its colours for camouflage. If disturbed, the normally shy creature will flash tiny rings of electric-blue all over its body. This is a warning to take seriously, as its poisonous bite is very dangerous.

Painted Dragonet fish can be found on the shallow seabed. The male has gorgeous orange, blue and yellow striped fins like sails. When trying to attract a mate, he raises these fins that run almost the length of his body and dazzles the female very effectively!



Thank you to our 'i sea, i care' supporters

We are grateful to the ANZ Bank and Coast Action/ Coast Care for their generous support.



communities caring for our coast

School Holiday Programs

Marine Education fun for the whole family!

"Dolphin Researcher for a Day"

Thurs. 25th September, 11.00 - 12.30

Sat. 27th September, 11.00 - 12.30

"Through the eyes of a Dolphin"

Friday 26th September 7.00 - 8.00pm

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL: 1300 130 949

Venue for all sessions is the Dolphin Research Centre, Hastings.